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APRIL, 1972 VOL. 21, No. 4

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TED WHITE

editorial

ONE OF THE MORE interesting facets of the job I hold is the way in which chance, casual utterances I've made in these pages can every now and then spark fiery letters of denunciation. A case in point is my review, in the December issue, of Sam Lundwall's *Science Fiction: What It's All About.* Almost alone among the sf magazine reviewers who mentioned the book, I did not think it the finest thing since fried bread (if I may borrow a phrase from Greg Benford for the nonce).

Of course when I reviewed the book I didn't know that mine would be the only negative reaction—but I was prepared for the possibility, as well as the possibility that one or more of you would respond angrily to the review. (I've heard nothing yet from Mr. Lundwall, who may or may not pay attention to his notices. Since he has gone on record with the statement that our sister magazine, AMAZING STORIES, "is now little but a shadow of its former self, filling much of its space with reprints from a happier time," I think we can safely conclude that he hasn't been reading us for the last three years or so. . . .) Imagine my surprise, then, when I found that none of you (to date—it is December 2, 1971, as I write this) disagreed with my opinion of Lundwall's book, but one of you emphatically objected to a chance remark made in my review of the book!

My remark was parenthetical: "(he correctly pegs *Star Trek* as having 'stubbornly held to the standards current in the pulp magazines of the thirties,' but seems totally unaware of the better sf movies . . . made in the fifties)".

I should have realized, I suppose, that *Star Trek* fandom was not dead, but only sleeping—and waiting to be aroused from somnambulance by that offhand jibe. And the slumbering giant awakened in the form of Mark Stephenson, who sent me the following missive, only the main portion of which I'm quoting (most of the invective aimed at innocent Sam Lundwall has been deleted):

"The thing about Lundwall's book and your critique that disturbed me," Mark says, "is the peculiar syndrome going around in SF these days which I call the Let's - get - *Star - Trek* - and - deify - the-*Outer-Limits*-Syndrome. Many so-called authorities, such as Lundwall and another dude by the name of John Baxter, author of that marvelous little piece of hackwork called *Science Fiction in the Cinema,* have been making snide, clever little comments about *Star Trek* and have at the same time been elevating *The Outer Limits* to a position of godhood in the history of SF on television. This is a position which it has not earned."

I'd like to interrupt Mark for a moment just to observe that my own criticisms of

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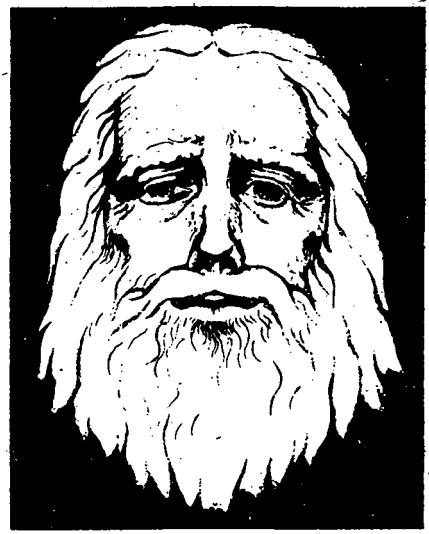

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The clergyman did not at once send for the chaps in white coats. Instead he questioned the truly worried child closely. She told him she had lived in a nearby village, and what her name had been. She said where her former body was buried, gave him the address of her husband and children and what all their names were, and asked him to drive over and find out if they were all right.

The clergyman made the trip. Much to his astonishment, he discovered the grave, the husband, the children, and all the current news.

The following Sunday he told the little five-year-old girl that the children were all well, that the husband had remarried pleasantly and that the grave was well kept.

She was satisfied and thanked the clergyman very much - and the following Sunday did not recall a thing about it.

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BEYOND THE RESURRECTION

GORDON EKLUND

Illustrated by STEVE HARPER

The publication of this novel here marks a special anniversary. Two years ago, in our April, 1970, issue, we published Gordon Eklund's first story, "Dear Aunt Annie." In the intervening twenty-four months, Eklund's reputation has quickly grown and his stories have appeared in some of the most prestigious science fiction anthologies and collections—as well as here and in our sister magazine, AMAZING STORIES. *Now we are proud to publish Eklund's new novel (his third; the first two were done as paperback originals), and I think I can safely predict that it will startle you and move you as few such novels ever have.*

FIRST DAY

Chapter One

CHORUS: CHILDREN OF NEW MORNING

OUTSIDE IT CONTINUED to rain as it had rained unceasingly for the past twelve hours, but within the north wing of the student dormitory of New Morning school, fifty-eight children, who ranged in age from ten to thirteen years, chattered excitedly in quick, whispering voices that were sufficiently loud to be heard by their companions but not so loud as to attract the attention of either Him or Her (as they were called), the appointed checkers for the night, who prowled the outer corridor, wondering, *Now what are they up to? Are they sleeping? Are they talking?* The checkers, a man and a woman, both teachers, wished this part of the night were done, for it was always the worst, waiting for the children to slip into silence, and after that it was only staying awake, finding some way to pass the time, keeping the eyes open and alert, struggling toward dawn.

This was New Morning, a school, an experimental school, owned and operated by an aged, crinkled man named Joyce Larkin, a former Hollywood gossip columnist who had founded the school some thirty years ago, designed to turn out children who were both healthy and whole, located on the northwest corner of an island, and the island was located near the center of a narrow body of salt water known as Puget Sound (after the explorer Peter Puget), which was located in the state of Washington, United States of America. The time was near the turn of the century and it was not a good time for this place.

And the children? What good is a school without children, and what point to having a dormitory without

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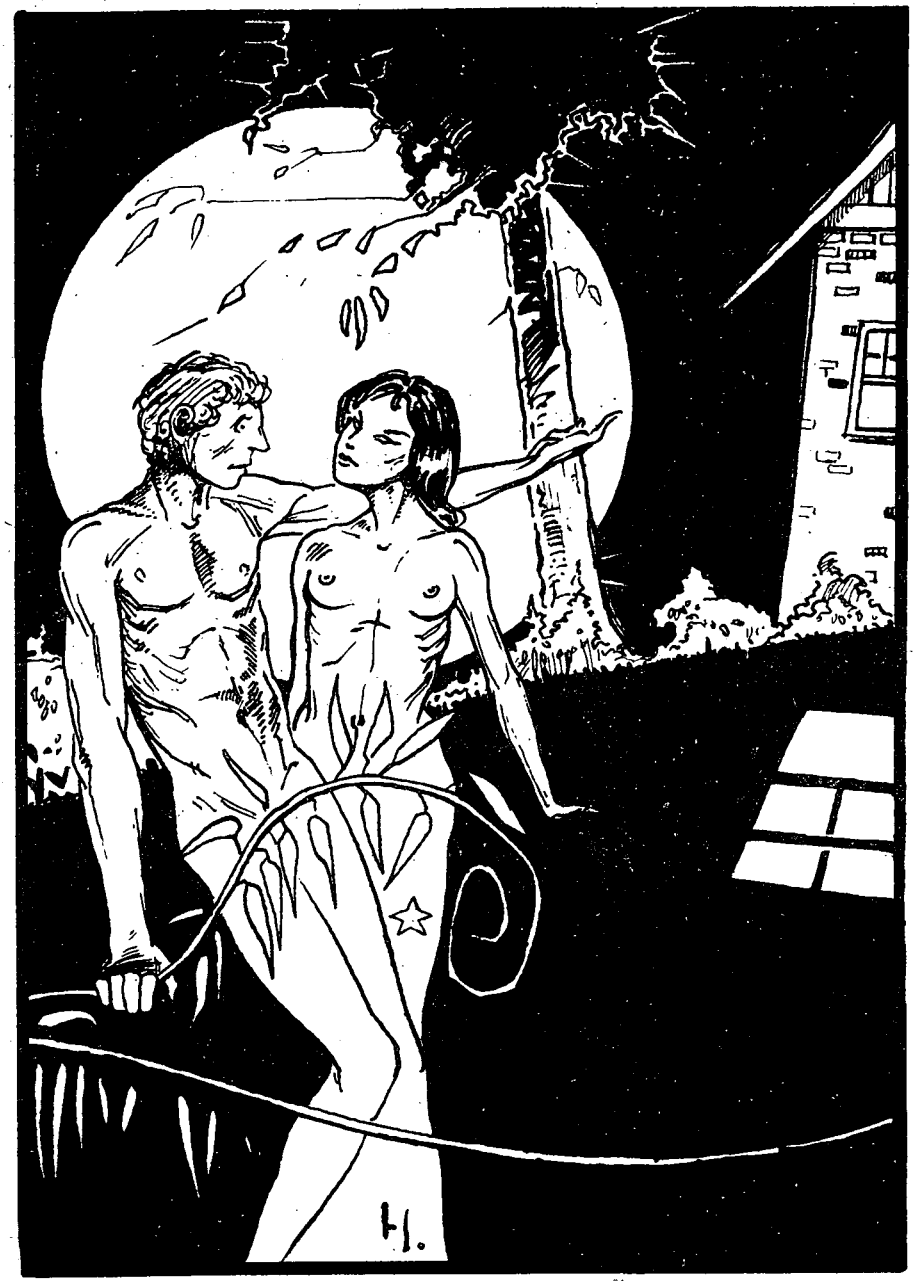

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occupants? The children occupied the dormitory, both wings, including this one, the north wing. Right now they were talking. Talking, yes—but softly. The lights had darkened around them only a half-hour earlier, and most were yet far from sleep. Outside, it continued to rain without pause.

Some of the children gossiped. They talked about the school, its founder and teachers. They talked about each other:

—And Sheridan, he says to me you'll either do it my way, young man, or you'll not do it at all, and, you know, he simply doesn't belong here. This isn't the place for Sheridan. I've tried to tell Larkin that. What's he doing with his you'll either do it my way or you'll not do it at all? What kind of freedom do you call that? And all I wanted was to cut the net off the old basketball hoop so I could use it for protection in a gladiator skirmish. What kind of freedom? I want to know. What kind of education?

Or:

—Beady-eyed Kenery looking at me through fruit pink eyeglasses and I walked right out on her and went down to see Larkin and I told him I wanted to go fishing and not listen to algebra, and he says he wants to know what I mean. And I tell him I want to be a fisherman when I get my certificate and I need the practice now if I don't want to starve then and he shakes his head and says for me to go down to the bridge. And I tell him there ain't a fish in the creek between here and the Sound, and he believes me, the dumb fart.

(And some of the children were dreaming, for some of the children, more withdrawn or introverted than the rest, perhaps less far along in their therapy, or perhaps not, these children preferred to sleep rather than talk, and so they drifted, dreaming of distant wondrous marvels flowing beneath a bright noonday sun.)

Or (more gossip):

Two girls occupied the last bunk in the left-hand row here in the north wing, the first older girl stationed in the upper berth, and the second younger girl in the lower, but right now locked snugly together in the lower bunk, but only because it was so much easier to talk this way.

—She went with him. Look. She's gone (said the older girl).

—And him (said the younger, softly) and him, old August. It's raining piss too. Listen.

The rain pattered and danced against the distant wooden roof of the dormitory, striking softly and gently, for the rain of this northern country was a gentle rain, though often continuous, a rain of beauty and rebirth and not one of darkness or death. The two girls, one eleven and the other thirteen, had been friends for two years, much closer than the hypothetical sisters neither had known. Both had names, but the names don't matter.

—They'll get wet. Everytime August does it again, he'll think of the wet. I know. My first time was during a snowstorm.

—Mine on the beach.

—It was not. You've never done it. You can't. You're only eleven.

I can too. And I did.

—When?

—But August. I can't even imagine it. Why would Melissa want to go with him? He seems so cockless, even if he must have one somewhere. He acts almost like he's never done it before, never even thought of doing it, and he's almost thirteen.

—He hasn't. He told her. I listened.

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He said he never felt the urge till tonight.

—And she went with him? Like that? Oh no.

She wanted to. She's asked him before. I heard her. And she likes him. And she likes it. You know how she is about it.

But Tallsman's checker tonight. He's a prude.

—Not him. His wife. Skinny wicked witch.

—Him too. If he catches them coming in all wet with their butts all soaked, he'll . . .

—He'll what? There's nothing. Miss McGee is the other checker. She'll take care of him.

And: much much more. Gossip, talk, chatter, dreams and the reflections of dreams.

And outside it was raining, the drops plunging against the squat green bush beside the rushing brown creek, washing away the accumulated dust of late summer, and below they crouched and waited. They were not talking. A boy and a girl. Neither much older than twelve or thirteen. Waiting. The rain had slipped lightly within their sanctuary, creeping beneath the bush, and their feet were slightly damp, their legs. The two of them.

—August? (said the girl).

—Yes, Melissa.

—Are you sure you want . . . ?

—Yes, I have to.

—And you don't mind?

—No, of course not.

—And you think you'll like it?

—I don't know. Can't we see?

Chapter Two

GREGORY TALLSMAN: CAN THE SUN SHINE BRIGHT AT TWELVE MIDNIGHT?

SITTING. AND READING. His eyes lifting and his eyes straying. Oh yawn; oh boredom; oh midnight. Gregory Tallsman turned his head slightly and peered at Corlin McGee. The two of them were sitting together on a wooden bench in a white corridor beside a high wooden door. Corlin was reading a book. She held it flat in her lap, turning the pages with a wet thumb, creasing her brow as she read. Tallsman was reading and correcting a thick stack of papers submitted by one of his classes. The papers could neither hold his attention nor conceal his restlessness. His classes studied Cinematic History and Technique. The woman beside him, Corlin McGee, had once been a student of his, not too many years ago, six or seven. She had come a long way since then, but Tallsman wasn't surprised. As a student, Corlin had been a bright girl, and she was surely an equally bright woman now. A girl, a woman, a girl.

"What are you reading?" Tallsman asked her. He placed the papers beside him on the bench and folded his hands in his lap. "Is it more method?"

"Oh, something like that," she said, smiling briefly. She went immediately back to her book, flipping a page.

Tallsman tried again. "It it a good book?"

"Some of it is, yes." She neither smiled nor glanced up. "Some of it isn't." Licking a thumb, she flipped another page.

Tallsman went back to his papers. The entire stack concerned an old American film he'd shown his lower class the day before, a picture from the thirties titled *Only Angels Have Wings.* It was a good movie, one of Tallsman's personal favorites, and he'd enjoyed seeing it again. But there honestly wasn't much to say about it. The film existed on the screen. All of it was

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there for a man to see. Tallsman read the top paper. It said: "This is a good film and very enjoyable. I liked it. To say another word would only make me (and it) sound silly." Now that was a good paper, he thought; now that was the truth.

But the one below it began: "The intensity of the scenes between Grant and Mitchell can only be compared in sheer vibrant emotion to the depths of feeling produced by the most unself-conscious of romantic poets."

Tallsman slipped this paper to the bottom of the stack. He turned his eyes away from the next and instead listened to the rain. *Pitter-patter-slap-slap.* He had lived in this country nine years now, but he had never become fully accumstomed to the rain. He had originally come from Colorado where, when it rained, it really rained. The sky cracked open and the water came down like a big roaring river. Not here. Here it was strictly *pitter-patter-slap-slap.* A man could walk for hours through a fierce downpour and barely get damp. Tallsman did not even own an umbrella.

"Corlin?" he said.

She glanced up and smiled at him. Briefly.

"Do you own an umbrella?"

"Yes," she said. "I do."

"Just wondered," he said.

The rain came down against the distant wooden roof of the dormitory like the light tiptoeing of a troop of graceful dancers. Gregory Tallsman listened, and the soft rhythm lulled him into a state of near-sleep. He closed his eyes, relaxed his muscles, and floated.

Now the girl, Corlin McGee, she was different. He opened an eye and looked at her. Corlin was a former student and she had gone the full distance and received her certificate. As far as she was concerned, education began and ended within the narrow confines of the school. Not that she knew anything much about education. Not that she was an instructor. Nothing as simple as that for her. Corlin McGee was an Intensive Therapist. She was Doctor Larkin's strong left arm. To her, the classes were only a necessary evil that had to be tolerated so that the real business of the school could be accomplished with minimal government interference. Tallsman opened his other eye and regarded her closely. Corlin. She was pretty, he thought. She had a certain youthful appeal, he decided. He did not like her. She did not like him. He did not like her because she refused to obey the rules he was forced to endure. He had Stephanie. He had had Stephanie for eleven years. Corlin had Clark Sheridan, who taught physical education. Tallsman hated Clark Sheridan, so why couldn't some sort of trade be arranged? He would hand Stephanie over to Sheridan (some appropriately dark and stormy night) and take Corlin home with him in return. He had heard that this sort of thing was quite common among the singles in the cities. It was common custom with them. But not him. He had had to get married, and now look where he was. He smiled, both eyes widely open, and looked straight at the girl. She didn't know he was looking at her. She continued to read. Or did she? Tallsman hastily lowered his eyes and returned to his papers. These long nights of uneventful watching were always an ordeal for him. Why couldn't Larkin simply assign two men to watch with each other? Avoid all these problems. Perhaps he ought to ask. No. He couldn't do that. The old man might get the wrong impression. He decided

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to try to ignore the girl. He removed the top paper from his stack and read: "What is the truth of existence? How can it most easily be discerned?"

Tallsman looked away. It was twelve-thirty now. That meant he and Corlin had another six hours to spend in each other's exclusive company. He stood and went over and put his ear against the door. He listened for the children but heard nothing. Maybe they had finally gone to sleep. They'd had an hour and a half in which to rid their systems of excess chatter. That was about right. He turned and coughed. Corlin raised her head and said, "Yes?"

She was going to be polite this time. He realized as he should have realized before that she did not really dislike him. It was only that he did not exist in her private universe, except as a most peripheral figure. Few people did, he thought. There was Sheridan, of course, and the various men who had preceded him. There was Larkin. And the men who wrote the books she was always reading. The children. But who else? Anyone else? Not so far as Tallsman knew. Corlin McGee's universe was a tiny one centered wholly around the grand concept of Intensive Therapy. She and Larkin were the central figures in this universe. But no one else. And certainly not him.

"Did you say something, Greg?"

"Oh," he said. "I'm sorry. I was wondering if I ought to check the beds. I don't hear anything."

"You're worried about them?"

"Of course not. But isn't it better if I check? Then we can both relax for the rest of the night."

"If you want," she said. "But I don't think you'll find what you're looking for. Nothing exciting." Her eyes returned to her book.

Opening the door quietly, Tallsman stepped softly into the darkened room. Fifty-eight children slept here in the north wing. About half were boys and half girls. These were the lower students, aged ten (usually) to thirteen. The older ones, the advanced classes, slept in a parallel wing. Two teachers stood watch over their door as well.

A dim vague light filtered through a half dozen open windows, emanating from the lighted grounds outside. It was bright enough to allow Tallsman to see his own feet as he moved forward. Once he paused and listened but heard nothing other than a great and heavy breathing as if some giant and mythical creature lay fast asleep somewhere in the room.

He moved down the center aisle, stopping occasionally when it wasn't immediately clear whether or not a certain bunk was occupied. He didn't think it was very likely that anyone would be missing tonight. It was too wet and cold for any but the most adventuresome to attempt a nocturnal escapade. Besides, all of them knew he was standing watch tonight. He was well known as a prude. Corlin couldn't have cared less if a couple were temporarily absent from the dormitory, but the rules said no, and Tallsman was a man who strongly believed in the rules. In the advanced wing, the rules were different. If any of them wanted to go out, they could, but few ever bothered. Six years ago, Larkin had partitioned two small rooms off the main wing and called them study chambers. It was much cozier there out of the cold and rain. But these children here were only children and the rules said no, so Tallsman studied each bunk carefully, checking for the shape and sound of a breathing body, then moved on to the next.

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Ah. He stopped. Here was an empty bed. Obviously so. Not even an attempt at subterfuge, the blankets thrown back and the sheets standing white and clean in the dim light. He made a mental note of the berth number. This was better, he thought. Now let me find the partner.

The second empty bed was two bunks down from the first. Again there had been no attempt at concealment, and Tallsman made a note of the number. Then he hurried down the aisle, eager to reach the end. He was forced to pause at the last bunk on the left hand side when he discovered two girls occupying the lower bed while the upper lay empty. He woke one of the girls and told her to climb up. She did as he asked, and he turned toward the door.

The children followed him down the aisle. Their breathing was individual now, separate and rasping. He knew some of them were surely awake and watching him pass. When they saw him leave, they would move. Perhaps if he only pretended to leave. If he hid and waited and caught them.

But no. Not tonight. Some other night when he wasn't in such a hurry. He went through the door, closed it at his back, and told Corlin: "Two missing. Twenty-nine and thirty-four."

"Always two," she said, absently. She referred to a list. "Twenty-nine is Melissa Brackett," she said. "Which isn't exactly a surprise. Sometimes she amazes me. And thirty-four is—" she flipped a page "—August."

"August?" Tallsman shook his head. "Now that can't be right."

"It is," she said.

"Let me see." He took the list from her and checked the names against the numbers. Well, there still had to be some mistake. Someone was playing a cute little game. August was certainly in that room somewhere. And fast asleep. Tallsman was convinced of that. But where? In someone else's bed, of course. A switch. A cute little joke.

He handed Corlin the list. "Well, it doesn't matter. Whoever's out there, I'll find him."

"No, you won't," she said, standing, turning, getting her coat. "I'll go."

"Let me," he said.

"No." She raised a long narrow object above her head and shook it at him. The object resembled a black wooden cane wearing a long dark skirt. "My umbrella," she said. "You haven't forgotten?"

"Well, if you want to." He shrugged.

"I want," she said. She turned and headed down the corridor. Her heels tapped loudly, the sound rebounding off the high white walls. Tallsman watched her pass through the outer door and disappear into the darkness beyond.

Then he went back to the bench and sat down and glanced at the spine of the book she had been reading. *Toward a New Psychology of Embryonic Sexuality* by Dalton Godwin. Tallsman let the words run across his tongue several times. They left a bad taste behind. Looking away from the book, he stood and began to shift nervously from foot to foot.

August? Out there? With Melissa Brackett? He had a difficult time restraining himself from open laughter. August was a strange one. Didn't nearly every school, every adolescent or preadolescent peer group have its one special strange one? August was the one here at New Morning. Tallsman could clearly recall his own school days. There had been a lot of strange ones back then, and the other children were always able to spot them at once.

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The strange ones were immediately plucked from among the flock. They were a necessity. They were made victims for the uncontrollable childhood aggressions of the others. Not that things were nearly this stark at New Morning. Not at all. August was a strange one but he was not a victim. If anything, the other children seemed to appreciate him more for his dissimilar behavior. Here was one thing about the school in which Larkin could truly take pride. The children of New Morning did not need victims.

But August was surely a strange one. What was it that made him this way? Tallsman thought, but he could not arrive at a clear answer. August was very small for his age (he was almost thirteen) and he was quiet, shy and diffident. He had a pair of huge black eyes and a long curling nose. His chin was nearly non-existent and his skin was pale and white. He was ugly. Funny-looking. But none of these factors seemed to be enough to provide a full answer.

There was sex. In attitude and appearance August was asexual. This was surely a part of it. But there were several other children of his age who were also late starters. But with them it was clear that they would eventually outgrow this stage. But August? Wouldn't August always remain just as he was now? Tallsman thought so.

August was a strange one.

He had neither parents nor history. None of the children knew this. As far as they were concerned, August was merely another boy. Tallsman was one of the few who knew the truth. He and Larkin had found the boy one summer afternoon four years ago. They had discovered him wandering aimlessly around the school grounds. They stopped him and questioned him. He answered (in a strange high lilting voice), claiming he had no name or parents. He couldn't remember his age. Larkin sent Tallsman into town to talk to the authorities. They didn't know. No children reported missing from the local area. Why should there be? And what business was it of theirs? With few exceptions, the local authorities disapproved of Larkin and the school. They would step out of their way to be especially uncooperative. Tallsman went back to the school, and August remained with them. That was how he had gotten his name. August. Because that was when they had found him. August 19. The boy had started at the first level (Larkin had decided he was nine, though he could have been eight or ten) and had managed to blend as well as he ever would. Considering that he was a strange one.

So, where was he now? He was outside, in the wet and cold, huddled underneath the rhododendron (where they always huddled at night) with a girl whose appetite was so enormous for her age that even Larkin joked about it. (But she was supposed to be good too, and it was more a case of an uncontrollable maternal instinct, rather than anything truly lustful. Melissa was a good girl. Even Tallsman—Tallsman, the prude—even he thought so.)

But August? With her? Now that was absurd.

The door at the end of the corridor opened and Corlin came bustling inside. Pausing in the doorway, she shook herself and dropped the umbrella. Then she hurried forward, forgetting to close the door, forgetting to retrieve the umbrella. She brushed past Tallsman, ignoring his questions, and went to the phone.

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She dialed two numbers. And waited.

Tallsman waited too.

She said, "Joyce—this is Corlin."

She said, "Yes, I'm sorry. But I had to wake you. Something has come up . . . No, I can't explain over the phone . . . You'll have to come at once. It's August . . . I'll have to show you . . . Tallsman . . . Right, I'll tell him."

She dropped the receiver and said, "Larkin says for us both to wait here."

"Why?" said Tallsman.

"He's coming," she said.

And that was all she would say. After a few minutes, Tallsman stepped down the corridor and shut the door. Then he went back to the bench, sat down, and dropped a stack of papers in his lap. Corlin stood near the phone, shifting from foot to foot. Outside and above the rain went *pitter-patter-slap-slap.*

Tallsman glanced at a paper and read: "The quality of this drama can only be compared with the most intense of—"

He stopped. He folded his hands. He waited.

Tallsman had come to New Morning nine years ago, bringing with him a raging enthusiasm for progressive education as it then existed, a sour-faced and pregnant wife named Stephanie, whom he loved, and a future that seemed certain to consist of long bright days of eager teaching. Now, after the rapid passage of those nine years, nothing remained of his original possessions except Stephanie and her sour face. His future had not greatly changed, however. He knew he would continue to teach here at the school, though not with any particular eagerness, at least until the day Joyce Larkin died. Larkin was already in his eighties, but he appeared as healthy and active as any man half his age. When he went, the school would almost certainly go with him, and that would be soon enough for Tallsman to consider other work. Not many schools had a requirement for an instructor in Cinematic History and Technique. Which was mostly why Tallsman stayed at New Morning despite the gradual erosion of his once raging enthusiasm for the school. Or at least this was the reason he gave his wife when she talked about his resigning and their finding a "more suitable place, something better for the children." The reason seemed to satisfy her. As well as anything ever satisfied her. It satisfied him. And that was all that really mattered.

Chapter Three
Corlin McGee: The Kindly Bush In Bloom

Corlin McGee crouched on the wet ground, balancing precariously on the balls of her feet, and pointed a finger at the overhanging bush. "Look down there. Shine your light. You'll have to. Look."

Doctor Larkin dropped down at her side, and she could almost hear the creaking of his ancient battered bones. He turned the flashlight on the ground beneath the bush and swept the beam from left to right. Corlin turned away. She had seen it once. So why again?

The rain battered at them both (and Tallsman too—she'd almost forgotten Tallsman standing alone, neither speaking nor looking) but it wasn't heavy enough to inflict more than minor damage. Larkin squatted on both knees, ignoring the rain and mud, staring at the thing that lay huddled beneath the bush. Corlin wished he

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would hurry it up. She wanted this whole thing done and over, wanting it to stand as an interesting episode from the past, something to be discussed unemotionally over a cup of tea beside a roaring winter fire, not an immediate and thrusting moment of the present.

She had seen enough. She stood and brushed at her skirt. Tallsman jerked his head questioningly at the bush, and she turned away from him. If he wanted to know, let him look. If Larkin could do it, so could he. If not, let him wait and wonder.

At last Larkin got to his feet and scraped at the mud that lay caked to his trousers. "Do you have a car?"

"No," she said. "Sheridan was going to take me home in the morning."

"I have my car," Tallsman said.

Larkin turned to the other man and nodded his head. He said, "Would you mind getting it for us? I think we ought to take them to my cottage."

"Certainly," Tallsman said. "I'll be happy to do that."

"Corlin, you'll come with me," Larkin said.

"Yes," she said. "I imagine that would be best."

Tallsman nodded, grinning effortlessly, listening to them. Then he turned and hurried away toward the dormitory. Corlin watched his bent, sloping figure scampering through the rain, moving close to the ground as if cowering in fear beneath the inevitable raindrops. What an ignorant and absurd man. Corlin despised almost all the instructors (even Clark, she reminded herself) and Tallsman was even worse than the rest of them, for Tallsman had his wife with him. And what was he trying to prove with her? Why didn't the whole lot of them—including those two dreadful kids—why didn't they simply pack their bags and move away? Find another part of the world to inflict with their unbearable tediousness?

Oh screw that, she told herself. No reason for that. Tallsman wasn't so terrible, and you can't have a school without a teacher or two, and even if his wife was his wife, and she was, he couldn't be held entirely to blame for her. She was letting this whole incident, this shapeless thing beneath the bush, influence her judgment far too much. And that was wrong.

She crouched down, rocking on her heels, and watched the wide slick rhododendron leaves swaying in the wind. Larkin switched on his flashlight, illuminating the ground beneath the bush, and she shook her head vigorously at him. The light went out. She didn't want to see. She had seen already, so why again?

But the brief flash of light had been enough. She had seen again, and it was worse than it had been before. The two of them were nearly one, a distinct and molded whole, flowing into each other, even the faces, cheek-to-cheek, and the eyes and lips and noses. Their clothes lay in a neat pile above what was once their heads. He was lying on top of her in a grim caricature of the sexual position. It was like—she searched her mind for a suitable simile—like they had been doing it and then (and when?) a tub of molten steel had suddenly spilled over them both, melting their bodies (but not burning them),

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drawing them so close together that they would never part.

"I wish he'd hurry," she said to Larkin.

He said, softly, "Now I don't think this is anything to worry about, Corlin." He was breathing heavily, almost gasping between words. "There's nothing we can't handle between us."

"Of course not," she said, still crouching. She fixed an expression on her face that represented womanly competence. It was one of her favorite expressions, and she lifted her hands and allowed Larkin to assist her to her feet. "Are you sure it's him?" she said, when she was standing.

"Who else? Don't say you're surprised."

"Well, not this. He's odd, but why would anyone have expected this?"

"But something like it," he said.

She nodded at that. Something very much like it, yes, for she knew August better than any of them. She had put the boy through Intensive Therapy and had glimpsed more of his true self than he'd ever voluntarily revealed. Even to Larkin.

"What is he?" she said, aloud.

"Now that's a question I can't answer."

"I suppose so," she said.

Hearing the sound of an approaching car, she used the noise as an excuse to drop the conversation. The car came slowly toward them, creeping through the rain, swinging around the bulk of the dormitory, the headlights avoiding the bush, gravel crunching like walnuts beneath the tires. It was a late model station wagon, an automatic, and the cockpit had been inflated to full size.

The car reached them, stopping a few yards from the bush. Tallsman disembarked and said, "Here you go."

"Thank you," said Larkin.

"Do you need any help?"

"No, but thank you. I think you'd better get back to the children. Someone still has to maintain a watch and—do I even have to—mention this?—please don't say a word to anyone. You understand this as well as any of us, Greg. You were with me—don't forget—the day we found him. You know he's not like the others. And I believe this will work itself out. I'm sure of it. We'll give it a few days—don't you agree?—and if not, then we'll proceed from that point. Isn't this best?"

"Of course," said Tallsman. He turned immediately and ran through the rain, his arms stiff and steady as posts at his sides.

"You'd better get them. I'll hold the light," Larkin said.

Corlin nodded and bent down. She lowered her eyes until she could barely see more than an occasional brief trace of light. With her fingers she felt beneath the bush. The ground was warm and dry, and then she touched the wet stickiness of molded human flesh. She clutched and pulled and felt the body moving. She pulled harder, digging her heels into the mud. The body came, inch by inch, and at last she heard the rain pattering noisely against the bare flesh. Releasing her hold, she turned away, opened her eyes, and sucked at the moist clean fresh air.

"Splendid," said Larkin. "Now for the end."

He helped her with the rest of it,

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moving the body the few remaining yards to the car, forcing it through the narrow side door, placing it evenly on the floor of the large storage area behind the rear seat. When that was done, they got into the car together, sitting in the front seat. Corlin took the wheel and saw that Tallsman had already adjusted the directional coordinates to Larkin's cottage. She put the car in gear, felt its answering thrust of power and motion, then turned to the side window.

Beside her, Larkin was breathing heavily in his ancient gasping way, but she chose to ignore his presence, concentrating instead upon the dark shadows of the passing night. The car bumped easily along the rocky ground beside the gently flowing creek. Larkin's cottage was only a few hundred yards from the dormitory, and the trip was not long. The car soon halted obediently, and the two of them got out and went to the back. They did not speak, and this was fine with Corlin. Together they carried the body into the cottage, went to a back bedroom, placed it on the bed, and covered it with a blanket so that only the molded face protruded. And that was what it was too. One face for two people. A pair of bright shining eyes, neither brown nor blue and certainly not black—a mouth and dry lips—a nose—ears—features that awkwardly combined the distinctive components of both Melissa and August, molding them into a true oneness that was neither he nor she, boy nor girl, that was someone else entirely, a new person in the world. But who? thought Corlin. And what?

They went into the living room.

Corlin turned and faced Larkin. Her hands dropped to her sides, and she felt her lips and chin trembling as she sought to form an expression of firm defiance on her face. She wanted to appear strong and stoic and unmoved, but it couldn't be done. She couldn't do it. Not alone. She needed help.

Larkin must have seen her ambivalence. Turning his back, he disappeared quickly into the kitchen, leaving her alone in the room. She stood and listened to him moving in the back and thought how he had lived within these same walls for nearly thirty years, ever since the day the school had opened. At the peak of his fame, when the school was booming with as many as three hundred pupils and his books were selling thousands upon thousands of copies, he was earning more than enough money to allow him to move into town and live in real style, but he had always preferred the quiet, secluded life. This place suited him well, the four small rooms, the cloistered atmosphere, the rows of books and taypes, the pale and white walls and ceiling. There wasn't an unnecessary object in the entire house. She knew. Once she had tried to find one. Everything was ultimately functional.

She called out: "I'm going now, Joyce."

"Oh, Corlin," he called back. "Oh, fine. And stop by tomorrow if you get the chance."

"I'll do that," she said, turning, leaving, stepping into the rain. She walked slowly to the car and got inside, automated it, and moved again along the creek. She was thinking about how she

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had once worshipped that man, back when she was his student, overwhelmed by his life and theories, unable to imagine an existence not centered around Joyce Larkin and Intensive Therapy and New Morning school. Well, she'd surely gotten the life she had desired. She knew more about the uses and methods of Intensive Therapy than anyone alive, except Larkin himself, and she wrote articles and one book and answered endless questions, and during the past few years while Larkin's own interest had seemed to fade, it had been she more than anyone who had kept the school alive and functioning. But she couldn't help remembering her school days when a glance from Larkin, a brief and passing smile, was enough to leave her deliriously happy for weeks at a time. She had even slept with Rogirsen twice when she was seventeen (and suffering the depths of puppy love) because she couldn't sleep with Larkin himself and Rogirsen was the man closest to Larkin and he had had to suffice.

She had only done it twice. That had been enough.

But she almost wanted him now. Rogirsen, poor mad Rogirsen (it had taken her twice to realize that), yes, she almost wanted him now. The incident, the episode, the event, the thing under the bush. It had affected her in a way she would not have predicted. Where had all her cold and scientific training gone when faced with a situation that was truly impossible? It had disappeared, gone, fled, and how was she going to get it back? It wasn't what had happened so much as it was the way in which it had happened. Why had it had to occur when they were screwing? Why not when they were cutting wood, or mowing the lawn, or talking, or watching one of Tallsman's moldy movies? Why not then?

The sight of the two of them locked together had been like seeing a sudden and broken and twisted fantasy image of herself and some anonymous man. It hadn't touched Larkin that way, of course. Sex was not an actuality for him. But for her, at twenty-three, a woman, for her exactly like witnessing the enactment of her deepest fantasy wishes on a lighted stage beneath a rhododendron bush. Clutching. Drawing closer. Bellies rubbing, hands grasping, scratching, down, thrusting, closer of closer. Hold me. Scratching. Smothering. Oh! Closer! How much closer? No more closer! *Together. One. Free! Oh free!*

Yes and no wonder. Wasn't that what she was always striving for? Wasn't that what she was really seeking in the endless repetition of the act? To be drawn so close to the man above (or below or behind) that she ceased to exist as an individual entity, that she became instead only an extension of him, drawn ever closer, deeper, until suddenly—*ping*—oblivion. She wasn't there any more. Corlin McGee? Who? There must be some mistake. There is no such thing as a Corlin McGee. I'm quite certain of that. She's only a part of that other one. That man. Oh, what is his name? Rogirsen, I think, or Sheridan or whomever.

Or Tallsman, perhaps. Right now, the way she felt, even him.

And why not? This wasn't the first time she had imagined sex with Talls-

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man, and so what if he was married? Honestly. Customs and mores come and go, constantly changing. What is correct and proper for one era may appear ridiculous (or perverse) in another. Marriage was considered a sacred institution at this particular moment in history, and why was that? Only because of its comparative rarity, because people married late in life, in their thirties and forties and fifties after years of careful exploration, because mistakes were rare, because nobody would think of marrying for sex alone. Because the present establishment, the government, was the first in history to combine liberal morality with conservative politics and make it work. Because Tallsman's marriage was surely a mistake. Because his wife was awful. So why couldn't he? And she? So why couldn't she?

When the car stopped at the dormitory, she bounded up the steps and raced down the corridor, going straight for Tallsman, and he watched her coming, and she studied his eyes, searching for the reaction she sought, and found it (perhaps) and fell into his arms, fell flat against him, his hands at his sides, clutching.

"Oh," she said. "Did you see it, Greg? Wasn't it—? Oh Greg, can't you tell me?"

"Corlin," he said, but not moving.

She looked at his face, his trembling lips, and said, "Help me, can't you see, help me, please."

And he put his arms around her. He held her in his arms.

But it wasn't any use. She felt the heaviness of his bulging waistline, the chill of his flesh, the flatness of his expression. His hands grew weak and tired and loose. Aimlessly, he stroked the flesh of her back.

She pulled away, turned her back. His hands touched her shoulders.

He said, "I'm sorry. I didn't look. Remember? I never saw it."

"That's right," she said. "That's all right, Greg."

They sat down together on the bench. She stared at the wooden door, beyond which slept the children, and he stared at her and the night passed away.

Pitter-patter, said the rain. *Pitter-patter-slap-slap.* The sun rose. Before that, the rain stopped.

Chapter Four
MICHAEL ROGIRSEN: THE EAGLE TOOK HIS EYE

HAVING SEEN BOTH of them just this morning walking together through the faint misty light of early dawn with their heads so close and nearly touching and conversing in whispers so soft that it was impossible for him to overhear, even allowing for his secret (to them) and famous (to him) talent of being able to hear sounds not audible to any normal man. This was, of course, because of the red Indian blood which coursed constantly through his veins but which Larkin had deliberately kept from him until the day he'd found the secret himself concealed behind the old man's desk and learned the full truth of his once hidden existence, fully realizing for the first time in his life that Larkin was a liar, a man never to be trusted, one of them, a man whose sole purpose in life was pre-

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venting him from fulfilling the totality of his fated destiny.

He peered through the front window of the cottage, then slipped around to the back and peeked through another window. (Larkin, being as casual as possible, never covered his windows) (or perhaps not—Rogirsen was beginning to glimpse the truth in this—perhaps Larkin was acting deliberately in order to ease his suspicions and then one day lure him unaware into the cottage and there—with the assistance of the woman—to mutilate, humiliate, torture and destroy.) This was something well worth considering, and Rogirsen proceeded with the utmost of caution.

He turned and went around to the front of the cottage where it faced the nearby creek. The rain had stopped several hours before, but the dirt at his feet was wet and soft, and his footprints followed him from front to back, then from back to front. The creek rolled noisely past, his keen Indian ears picking up the bubbling swish of passing fish, and his prints would serve as a reminder to both of them that he was not unaware of their plotting, that he was very strong and fully dedicated and willing to fight for his life. His feet cut deeply into the wet molding earth, and his tracks followed him to the front door.

Rogirsen tried the knob. The door was not locked. He was not surprised; the door was never locked. For a long moment, he stood with his hand resting easily on the knob. Michael Rogirsen was a sly man. Cunning. He glanced casually over one shoulder and immediately noted the suspicious character of the land, its utter desolation, and the sudden, almost questioning silence of the creek. He looked above, studying the gray sky for signs of life. A spying aircraft; a balloon; a helicopter. They had used all these tactics against him in the past and he was ever vigilant to prevent a repetition of their previous success. He had a motto: *Once bitten—twice shy.* You could fool him once, but not twice. Or thrice, for that matter.

For example, there was the incident with the bird. That was one Rogirsen recalled with a clarity that was nothing short of frightening. Larkin had built an artificial bird in his laboratory at the school. The bird, despite its mechanical origins, possessed all the appearances of natural life, from blood to belly, from feathers to beak. Larkin had released the bird to the sky. Sent it spying. On him. On Rogirsen. It had taken him three days and three nights to trap the creature. When he had, chuckling with delight, laughing with glee, he had made himself a meal of the thing, a surprisingly tasty dish; but then, in a momentary flash of insight, the truth had dawned on him. Larkin had known. He had known in advance exactly what he would do. And the bird was inside him. Spying. Relaying the most private of knowledge to its master. He had vomited again and again, cleansing his body of every last trace of the tainted bird, and what a memory, so pure and clear, like a minute ago, the last of it swirling madly down toward the bowels of the island. He'd won that battle but the war was far from done.

Enough of that. Rogirsen entered the

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cottage. He was careful in closing the door; he was careful in crossing the room. Some trace of his entrance could not be avoided, for Larkin kept strands of taut animal hair stretched across certain portions of the room, strands so fine as to be nearly invisible to the naked eye, and he knew he could not reach his destination without disturbing one or two. Still, he was careful. And still, it was worth the danger.

If it hadn't been for last night, none of this would have been necessary. But what had happened had happened and some sort of response was now unavoidable. It was her. The woman. All white woman and damn her, come creeping into his sleeping place and her wanting and demanding him while knowing all along the poison they fed him made it impossible for him the escape the ultimate humilation. And it had gone as it had always gone with the woman, and she'd laughed and cried, had her fun, toyed with him like some smothering jungle snake all wrapped around and moaning like a snake, spitting, clawing, weeping like a snake.

Then later, done with him, she'd gone to Larkin and told him everything. This was the part Rogirsen could never forgive. He'd heard their every word (his red Indian blood coursing), even through the noise of the creek, the pattering of the rain, and together they'd had their laugh, then made their plans, whispering this last so that he could not hear. But he could guess, which was why he was here; it wasn't hard to guess.

The bed would fix everything. Once he reached the bed.

He moved quickly now. He went straight for the back bedroom, where once upon a long time ago he had lived and slept and where the process had begun, the pushing him back to places he did not want to go. Back and back. Stop—no!—back. He remembered that too.

The door was open. He went into the bedroom.

Wait.

What? What was it? He stood and looked and this was something new. A . . . thing. That was what it was. All man and woman and done into one and neither and lying on the bed, playing at sleep and—but, no wait, the eyes were opening.

Looking at him.

The eyes were grinning. Then the lips, the mouth.

"Hello," it said.

Get away.

"Rogirsen," it said. "August."

Rogirsen turned away. August? No, it couldn't be August, because August was a friend. This was merely a trick. Larkin's way of driving them apart. Larkin didn't want him to have friends, so he had made this thing in his laboratory (like the bird—exactly like that) and—

"Rogirsen. Me."

No. Rogirsen put his hands over his ears, his keen sharp Indian red ears. He refused to listen. But the thing stood and came forward and touched him.

"Rogirsen. Look at me. Michael."

He would not look. Running. Out through the living room and out through the door, snapping a thousand strands of taut animal hair, snapping them like a spider's web, running, out

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across the grounds, toward the gleaming gash of the rushing creek.

The fish were crying. Come to us and we will wash you clean. Oh Rogirsen. Diving into the water, he clawed at the mud. He screamed, wept, begged.

Oh Rogirsen. And above in the sky a million eyes flickered, blue eyes, blinked, brown eyes, blotting out the sun, red eyes, black, opened, all eyes, then stared at him.

Oh Rogirsen.

The eyes.

Chapter Five

GREGORY TALLSMAN: ASH AND WATER

TALLSMAN STOOD at the front of the classroom and rubbed his eyes. Other days and other times. He couldn't help remembering when he'd weave homeward after a long night of wakeful watching and slip between warm sheets after a breakfast of bacon and eggs and orange juice and toast. None of this was extraordinary, he knew, but it was the ordinary things in life, the most conventional and most enjoyable that Tallsman liked best. Right now he would happily settle for just that. He'd even forgo the breakfast of eggs and bacon and juice and toast if, in return, he was allowed the comforting warmth of the sheets. He was exhausted, half dead on his feet. And the class kept staring at him, expectantly waiting.

He shook his head, sweeping his mind, and tried to return their stares. The vacant seats easily outnumbered the occupied ones today, mostly because of the big red sun which had suddenly cracked the dull gray sky about an hour ago, and Tallsman forced himself to make a quick count and entered the two-digit number (but barely) on the proper line of the official government form. He taught only two classes a day, both two hours in length, the first beginning at ten, the second at noon. It was ten o'clock and this was his most enjoyable class, the advanced seniors. The movies he screened here were usually better, more able to withstand frequent viewings, and the students themselves were more apt to say something new and interesting to him. In the old days, when he was a younger and more idealistic man, he had often said that he loved teaching because it provided him an opportunity to continue learning throughout his life. You can learn more from a child than you can ever teach him, Tallsman used to say back then. He hadn't said anything like that in many years, but he still believed it. Sometimes he still believed it. Like now. He believed it now.

He clapped his hands once, and the class fell silent. He said, "Did anybody happen to bring anything with them today? Anything good, I mean."

Four hands went into the air, three with adolescent certainty and the fourth more tentatively.

"Good, good," said Tallsman. "That means I won't have to talk. That means we can go ahead and look at some of our own work. Tomorrow I'll have some good things to show, so if you see anybody who's not here today be sure and tell them to come."

Then he turned away and went to the back of the room and took a seat. He had decided to pass the two hours

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quickly by letting the students show their own films. With the lights extinguished, he could safely bury his head in his hands and close his eyes and relax and nobody would necessarily have to know. Besides, very often the films were well worth watching. Tallsman had seen a great many talented people pass through his classes over the years. Some had even progressed all the way into the professional world of filmmaking and Mentatape, and this had made him very proud.

While his mind drifted, the students scurried about and arranged the room for the screening. The lights were switched off, the shades were drawn, and the projector and screen were readied. Without warning, the first film began. Tallsman watched the initial footage. The opening was the usual for an outdoor film, a shot of the rolling creek with Larkin's cottage looming whitely in the background. Two people could be seen distantly moving beside the cottage. The camera forded the creek and bumped ahead in order to observe the people. Tallsman laid his head in his hands and closed his eyes. The film continued. Tallsman was fairly certain he had seen this one before, and if not, he doubted he was missing much. Not necessarily because of the opening shot. Larkin's cottage was the only suitable location on the school grounds, except for the old caretaker's cottage, and that was where Rogirsen lived, and the students were afraid of Rogirsen. Except for August. August and Rogirsen were good friends, frequent companions.

Which put Tallsman back in a place he did not care to visit. With August. And Corlin. In the dormitory, then outside and watching as two separate and individual human beings became a single entity and while Larkin mumbled and stumbled and acted old and dying. And then it was morning and back with Stephanie, and she was dashing at him like a hungry bear as he pulled himself into the house, and she snapped at him, munched at him, rending his flesh and demanding: *what was this?* and *why was that?* and *who was she?* and *why won't you answer me?*

But he was answering her. Every trivial Stephanie question was getting its proper reply.

"I can tell something went wrong out there last night and I'm not even going to ask you what. I just can't see it. Tell me why. Why do we have to stay here when both of us hate it?"

"You know why. There's no place else to go."

"Government school. I still don't see that. You've a good teacher, aren't you? You believe in their system. You do don't you? And so if—"

"Because they don't have classes in—"

"But that shouldn't matter. You're loyal aren't you? That's what ought to matter, and I bet I know what it is. Guilt is what it is. Just that. If we'd never come here, if we'd only known in advance how it was, we could do it now."

"No, that's—"

"Stop it! Can't you see that I can't stand any more of this?"

She went on. The children had refused to sleep. The rain frightened them and disgusted her. Why do we

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have to live here? Why can't we go and—?

He had been sorely tempted. Tallsman grinned at his hands. He could have told her during one of those rare moments when she was forced to pause for air. So you think something went wrong last night. You say you can see by the way I'm acting. Well, maybe you're right this time. Dear. You see, it was this way. August and Melissa went outside to screw beneath the rhododendron, and I disapprove of that sort of thing because you've made it certain that I can't very well approve, and I went in and found their beds empty, so Corlin went outside to bring them back and she found them, yes, they were under the bush, but they were all molded together. I think that's the best way of putting it. I got a good look but I wouldn't let anyone know. Molded together, each absorbed by the other, as though a tub of molten steel had spilled over them at the peak of their activities. Do you see it now? Is it clear in your mind? Or do you have a sheet of blank white paper around? Maybe a drawing from life would help in making the scene clear in your fat and bloated brain. Dear.

But he hadn't said that, hadn't said a word, maneuvering her so that he could break for the bedroom and grab a quick nap before he had to return to school for his ten o'clock class. Not that she was about to allow him that. She hadn't been able to sleep last night. Not with that driving slashing pounding rain beating down on the roof as though the Great Flood had come again.

Somebody was shaking him. "Hey, Tallsman, wake up—there's something outside."

He opened his eyes, squinting. The lights were on and the students stood beside the windows facing the creek. Stifling his embarrassment at being caught napping, he pushed between two of them and looked outside.

"Get back to your chairs. You've seen this. Now go."

"Look at him out there. The old goof."

"All of you stay here," Tallsman said.

He went into the corridor and headed toward the outer doors, knowing it was strictly up to him to settle this. For reasons he had never fully understood, Rogirsen trusted him. Only two other people—Larkin and Corlin—were able to handle him when he was in the midst of one of his fits, and they did it with fear rather than trust. And for good reasons too. Larkin was the one who had made Rogirsen what he was—Intensive Therapy's one and glaring failure—while Corlin, as a girl, had ensured that he would never change.

Tallsman ran across the grass. In the distance, Rogirsen danced, stumbling in the creek, water splashing as he pounded it with his fists as though the creek were a living creature able to feel pain. At least he wasn't likely to drown. Not unless he tripped and fell and hit his head. Even in the middle, the creek was less than three feet deep.

Tallman drew closer. He had stopped running, but now he began again, because there was another person in the water with Rogirsen, trying to subdue him. Tallsman hurried. He

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had recognized the other man. It was Sheridan. The physical education instructor and Corlin's good friend. Tallsman turned as he ran and shook his fist at the school. The windows were dotted with the faces of peering students. He turned back to the creek. The faces stayed.

By the time he reached the water, Sheridan had Rogirsen on the edge of the bank. He was squatting over him, his knees holding the other man's arms pinned to the ground.

"Let him up," Tallsman said.

Sheridan shook his head, panting. His clothes were soaked.

"I can handle him," Tallsman said.

Sheridan turned around and looked at him. A wide streak of blood ran down his forehead, past his eyes, crossing his lips and jaw.

"Come on," Tallsman said. "This isn't helping."

Sheridan moved away and got to his feet. He set himself for trouble but Rogirsen remained flat on his back. Sheridan wiped at the blood on his face. Rogirsen grinned widely at the sky.

Tallsman crouched down. The creek streamed past, only inches away, and Rogirsen's worn dirty clothes were drenched with water. Tallsman said, "You'd better go home, Michael. You're wet."

"Catch cold?"

"You might. Here—would you like me to help you?"

"Yes," Rogirsen said.

Tallsman helped the other man to his feet. Rogirsen shook himself like an animal and rubbed at his clothing. He looked at Sheridan, then past him, through him, as though he weren't really there. "Better go home," he said.

"I think that's a good idea, Michael. You're very wet."

"A good day. Day for swimming."

"Yes."

"You're wondering. Thinking I'm crazy again."

"No. Whatever you do, it's all right with me. You're a free man, Michael. I don't mind."

"Larkin puts a thing in his house. Thing tries to kill me. Some kind of thing."

Tallsman said, "Oh."

"You're thinking I'm lying again." Rogirsen swiveled his head and pointed it across the creek at the cottage. "Thing is still there. Go and look. Might not try and kill you."

Rogirsen nodded and grinned. Three of his front teeth were missing. "Too quick," he said, then walked off, dripping water. As he moved, his narrow hips jerked and swayed. He rubbed at his head, and twice he turned and waved at Tallsman.

Tallsman waved back.

Sheridan dabbed his sleeve at his forehead. He said, "Fought like a tiger. Knocked me down and banged my head against a rock."

"Better go see the nurse."

"I'll live. It's only a cut, but why they let a nut like him run around loose I'll never understand. You tell me. And these kids. It's a miracle he hasn't killed one yet."

"He's harmless."

"So far." Sheridan lost interest in his forehead but the blood kept flowing. He turned away.

Tallsman said, "He's harmless." He

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was waiting for Sheridan to leave. He wanted to go to the cottage and see the thing that was waiting there. But he wanted to go alone.

Sheridan said, "What happened with you and Corlin last night?" His back still faced Tallsman. Was he ashamed of the blood?

"Nothing," Tallsman said.

"She came home this morning like something had happened. I just wondered."

"Nothing happened."

"Well, keep your secrets if you want them. I've got to get back to my kids. I'll see you later, Tallsman."

"Right," said Tallsman. He sat down on the ground and watched the tumbling creek rolling past. He waited until he was certain Sheridan had gone, then waded through the water, heading for the cottage.

Why had they brought the body to the cottage anyway? Hadn't anyone had sense enough to remember that Rogirsen would surely come poking around the next day? Tallsman hadn't thought of it, but Larkin should have known.

The front door was half-open. He pushed through it and stepped inside, stopping in the middle of the living room and listening. Then he laughed at himself. What had he expected to hear? The shuffling step of a caged monster?

He stepped quickly and bravely down the hall to the rear bedroom, but when he got there all he found was an empty bed and a wrinkled orange sheet.

He went into the other bedroom and glanced at the kitchen and went outside and circled the cottage. Then he put his hands to his lips and cried: "August! Melissa! Where are you?"

Then he turned and hurried away, heading toward the school.

Chapter Six
JOYCE LARKIN: REPORTING THE BURIED LIFE

SITTING BEHIND HIS bare slick desk, rocking and rolling in a padded chair, his hands firmly clasped across his chest, Joyce Larkin thought contented thoughts of death and dying. These were the subjects which at eighty-two concerned him more concretely than all the other myriad subjects of heaven and earth rolled into one. Death was a constant presence. Right now, as he sat rocking, it rocked with him, pulsing beneath his folded hands. Larkin suffered from cancer of the lungs; he was dying from cancer of the stomach. The combined activities of the disease consumed a bit of him each passing hour until, with a sigh, he momentarily left his life and school and went to the city and the machines toyed with him and when he came home he brought another six months of life with him and added those days onto the eighty-odd years he had previously been granted.

The cancer in his lungs was less significant, on the whole, than the older, more advanced growth in his stomach, but lately he'd spent many more hours contemplating the newer growth and had tended to ignore the older one. The cancer in his stomach had been discovered ten years ago while the growth in his lungs had been there less than six months, had been

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arrested only once by the pulsating government machines. It was about time to go again, he knew. He could feel it moving in there, both places, tentatively groping forward, wondering *Have I got him now? Has he finally given it up? Will I get my fill of him this time?*

No, he wanted to tell it, tell both of them, old malignant stomach and new growling lungs, *you have not got him this time. Nor will you ever.*

But why not? Why not go ahead and die? There was, after all, no pressing reason why he ought to continue to live. Nothing, in fact, except for the barren pleasure of continued conscious awareness. A few more breaths of air. A couple flowers to be smelled. What else? Little else.

They had him right where they wanted him, imprisoned in a cage without bars, and he could free himself only by dying. They had told him that ten years ago. We'll be happy to save you, Larkin, but there are a few minor things we'll expect you not to do in return. That's right. We're not asking you to do anything for us. Only asking you not to do a few minor things. Don't push ahead. Keep your school, but don't improve it. Don't train a successor. When you die, we'd prefer to see New Morning go with you. It is a bit of an anachronism, you know, better dead and buried in this modern age. Under these conditions, however, we'll gladly tolerate its continued existence and yours as well. If you stop doing nothing, then we'll have to start doing nothing, and within a few months you'll be dead and buried and, presumably, your school with you. So what do you say, Larkin? Is it a bargain? We can start treatment this very moment, if you so desire. No point to waiting, is there?

No point. And he had so desired. That was the substance of the bargain he had accepted and the bargain he had kept. If in order to stave off death he had to do nothing, then he would do nothing. And he had. Not for ten years, and the results were surprisingly obvious. The school was dying. The student population had declined to half its peak figure. Contributions had slowly but surely dwindled away. New classes, experimental methods and techniques, teacher/pupil involvement, all of these were things of the past. His intructors were no longer the best in the world. The few new ones who drifted in came in search of peace and tranquility. They wanted security and this was what they found. New Morning was a safe place, unexciting but pleasant and secure.

Twenty years ago, it had been different. Joyce Larkin had taken pride in the fact that he had managed to cram two hundred years of living into the first six decades of his life. He had come into the world in the good year of 1922, never knowing his father but unable to avoid the glorious domination of his mother. Once the two of them, mother and son, had gotten together in an attempt to discover once and for all the true identity of Joyce's father. Martha Larkin could not have cared less. Joyce was her son; why should she share him with some strange man whom she hardly knew? But Joyce had insisted that he had to know and they went over a list of names, eventu-

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ally trimming the possibilities to three. Joyce went looking, found two of the men, both actors, and promptly crossed them off his list. He did not like them. He could discover nothing of himself in their pale dull features. The third man could not be found. In 1932 he had disappeared into the interior of China, intent upon joining the Communist movement there, and had never been seen again. Joyce settled on this man as his father. Nobody could ever prove otherwise.

But he did not really need a father, living or dead. He should have known this. His mother was more than enough parent for any man or boy. Martha Larkin had never been a really big star, probably because unlike most of her Hollywood contemporaries she was an excellent dramatic actress, having spent ten years on the legitimate New York stage before coming to California in search of wealth and fame and a good home and (most importantly) a clean and suitable environment in which to raise her son. She was twice nominated for the Academy Award in supporting character roles, but never won. It didn't bother her particularly. Unlike most of her contemporaries, she was a truly searching woman, whose intellectual pretensions were considerably more than that. She enjoyed music, art, literature (particularly the avant grade, though she was well able to separate the true experimenters from the flock of fakers who surrounded them), dabbled in radical politics, helping Hemingway and Dos Passos make their film in Spain, and liked good clothes. Men she found universally boring.

As a boy, Joyce enjoyed an excellent education. Through various means, always legal but seldom fair, his mother gained entrance for him to a string of prestigious Eastern schools and academies, culminating in a degree from Princeton (Harvard proving too much even for Martha Larkin) in 1944. Joyce skipped the war—it didn't interest him—and got a job, and within five years his column *Hollywood Eavesdroppings* was syndicated in nearly two hundred newspapers worldwide. It was a better than average column too. Most of his information was accurate and there was considerable space devoted to the real product of Hollywood (movies) rather than the more artificial glamor of the town (stars). Then television came along and his column lost much of its popularity (Joyce refused to look at television—it wasn't his medium) and his mother died in 1950 at the age of sixty-three, leaving her estate in the hands of her last husband, a man three years younger than Joyce.

Not having much else to do except mourn and grieve, Joyce kept writing his column for several years. In 1963 he finally dropped it completely, though by this time fewer than twenty papers were continuing to run it. Then he went back to school and got himself another degree. He liked it, so he got another one, and within a few years he was correctly known as Doctor Joyce Larkin, and he went up to Yale and started teaching undergraduates the facts and theories of psychology. He hated the work. What crap. So he quit after a year, looked up a lot of old friends, and with their money formed his own school. He called it New Morning and tucked it away in

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a distant corner of the country where nobody could see it unless they went especially looking for it. He got the best teachers he could find and put them to work. He developed some methods and wrote a book about them. But it still did not seem as if it were quite enough, so he developed Intensive Therapy and made it the essential part of his educational curriculum. He wrote another book and got denounced.

Intensive Therapy was either a fascinating combination or a wholesale theft (depending on whom you read) from the entire history of psychology and psychoanalysis, including several theorists normally regarded as crackpots. Basically, Larkin took the average ten-year-old (the perfect age, he felt) and forced the child to relive his life, then his birth, then beyond, and finally beyond even that until the child was simultaneously living and reliving all of his lives (and there were a great many, Larkin discovered). When it was over and done, the therapy complete, the child should have been a well and whole human being. Of course, it never happened this way, but it worked well enough to satisfy Larkin. He became a famous man again. The children of the rich and powerful poured through the gates of his school. He kept them for a maximum of nine years, then turned them loose on the world. For the most part, they worked out very well.

Until, that is, the day he caught cancer of the stomach and chose to sell himself to a new and less bold government at the price of his own life. After that, it was over and done, the glory was gone, but he kept on living and kept on wondering why.

And then there was last night. Last night might well have been the beginning of the end. If so, Larkin welcomed it. He was ready; he was not afraid.

He said, "Come in." He had ignored the knocking the first time it had come, but the second series of raps had sounded quite insistent. "The door's open."

A small man with slick black hair, brown skin and a sloping face that tapered into a weak chin entered the room. The man wore a tight-fitting brown uniform with two silver bars on each shoulder. He carried a gun at his waist, and his name was Antonio Milinqua. He was the local area supervisor for the island and he often visited Larkin.

"Hello, Antonio," said Larkin.

"I'm not interrupting you?"

"No. Oh no. I was merely thinking. I knew it was you at the door. The children never knock. They march right in."

"Which is why I am glad that my children do not attend your school. I would not appreciate their bad manners."

"You don't have any children."

Milinqua sat down in a stiff back wooden chair across from Larkin's desk. He looked comfortable and he crossed his short thin legs at the ankles. He said, "That's true."

"Then what can I do for you?" Larkin said. "You didn't come all the way out here for a simple chat."

"No, I didn't. I'm afraid this is an official matter, Joyce. But a simple thing. Of no great significance. It's

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merely an excuse, you might say, for a chat."

"That's fine," said Larkin, smiling. He crossed his hands over his stomach, then jerked them suddenly away. He dropped them flat on his desk and hoped Milinqua had failed to notice the abruptness of his action. He could wait no longer. He would have to seek immediate treatment in the city. He had felt that thing in there, that cancer in his stomach, had felt it reaching out and grasping hungrily at the warm tingling flesh of his hands.

"I need a listing of your students," Milinqua said. "Their names, parents' names, addresses."

"Why?" Larkin asked.

"An order."

"But why come to me?" Milinqua was not telling the truth, which intrigued Larkin. As far as the island was concerned, Milinqua was supreme lord and master. He took orders from no one locally. Nor was his task a minor one. There were several government installations on the island, including a large secret research station on the southeastern tip.

"You don't have such a list?"

"Oh, I have one. But so does your machine. Why not ask it?" Larkin knew Milinqua was merely playing a game with him. He also realized that the man was doing it for his benefit.

"I'm asking you. Now, Joyce, please." He reached across the desk and his smile enlarged. "I must have this list."

Before Larkin could reply, the door opened, interrupting him. A boy of twelve or thirteen bounded into the room as quick as a ball. The boy was fat, tall and red-headed, with freckles dotting his face and arms as big and thick as measles. The boy said, "Hi, Larkin. Who's this?"

Larkin introduced the boy, whose name was Steven, to Antonio Milinqua. Milinqua said, "Hi Steve."

The boy said, "Hi Tony," and came toward Larkin. He said, "I've got to use your typewriter for a minute, Larkin."

"Why?" said Larkin.

"Because I have to send a letter to my mother. What do you think? You think I'm writing a book of poems?" The boy stopped, put his feet together, and glared at Larkin, fists against hips, elbows jutting like sharp speers. "Nobody will let me use their vocorders. I broke mine and they think I'll break theirs."

"Will you?" Larkin asked. Milinqua was twitching impatiently. Larkin ignored him. He had never seen Milinqua twitch before, and he was enjoying the sight. Steven had come at the exact proper time.

"It was an accident," the boy said. "So what?"

"Will you break mine?"

"You don't have one."

"I mean my typewriter."

"Of course I won't break it. Why should I?"

"All right," Larkin said, slowly. "I'll trust you." He vacated his chair and allowed the boy to take possession. He went over and he sat down beside Milinqua. The stiff-backed chair was like steel against his frail bones. He muttered with discomfort. The boy jerked the cover off the typewriter, blew a cloud of dust, inserted a sheet of blank

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paper and began to peck away at the keyboard.

"The list," said Milinqua.

"Oh," said Larkin. "One moment." Happily accepting the opportunity to move, he stood and went into an adjoining room that had once been used by his secretary when he'd had a secretary. The room was cluttered and empty and he opened a filing cabinet and removed a folder. He thumbed through the contents of the folder and then closed it and carried it back to his office. Milinqua plucked the folder from his fingers and opened it in his lap.

Larkin remained on his feet. The boy pecked away at the typewriter. He asked Larkin how to spell *resplendent* and Larkin told him.

Milinqua said, "This list isn't complete. A boy is missing."

"No," Larkin said. "That's it."

"This list is the same as the one I have."

"But doesn't that—?"

"How do you spell *ramifications?*"

Larkin told him.

"There's a name missing on both lists. A boy. We have a record. Surely you recall the incident. The boy appeared here several years ago, mysteriously. He was taken in. We have a full record of the incident. One of your teachers came to us."

"That's right," Larkin said.

"Where is he?"

"In his classroom."

"The boy? August?"

"No. The teacher. Tallsman."

"I want the boy."

"I can't tell you," Larkin said.

"But—" said Milinqua. He was interrupted by the office door opening. A head popped through and was gone again before anyone could put a name to it.

Larkin said, "I'm sorry, Antonio."

Milinqua said, "I must have this boy. I hate to say this. You and I have always been friendly, if never friends. But this is of the utmost importance to us. If you do not let me have this boy, then I must tell you. I will make a full and complete report regarding this conversation. If I file this report—"

"How do you spell *necessities?*"

"Shut up," Milinqua said.

Larkin spelled the word for the boy.

Then Milinqua continued: "If I report this, I will be forced to make a recommendation. Your treatments for cancer will be discontinued. I think you know the result. You will die. Now—think. Is it worth it? This one boy."

"The boy isn't here. He's not in the school."

"I'm sorry," Milinqua said. "You have until noon tomorrow. I owe you that much. In the meantime, my men are searching your buildings. If they happen to find the boy, I will forget this conversation. My report will be favorable."

"The boy isn't in the school," Larkin said.

"I am sorry," Milinqua said again. He reached into his tunic and removed a folded paper. He handed the paper to Larkin and said, "Official Emergency Situation. This authorizes my search." He went for the door.

He was gone.

Larkin sat down in the chair Milinqua had vacated. He clasped his hands

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together around the paper. He put his hands in his lap.

The door opened. Tallsman entered, glancing at the boy, then at Larkin. He said, "I have to see you alone, Doctor. It's very important."

"All right," Larkin said.

Chapter Seven

JOYCE LARKIN: THE SUNSET WAS BRIEF LIKE A DYING MAN'S BREATH

THEY IGNORED the buildings, the school and dormitory, the two small cottages, his and Rogirsen's, knowing that Milinqua would search them competently and thoroughly but checking back after an hour to ensure that nothing had been found. Nothing had been found, and so they swept wide in their search and began to peck at the edge of the woods, then to infringe upon it, then to search it as thoroughly as possible. There were few trails in the woods. On the whole it was as deep and dark and impenetrable as a Louisiana swamp. Even the children seldom ventured far into the woods. Their first few weeks, sometimes they did since it was something new strange. Those first few weeks it was the enchantment and nearness of real trees and flowers and vines and ferns. But that did not last, a week, two weeks, never more, not for those who were well-adjusted. Anything that could be done within the woods could as easily be done without, and there were children outside the woods who laughed and talked and played, and there was nothing inside the woods except real trees and flowers and vines and ferns. And silence. Trees and flowers and vines and ferns do not talk. Or laugh. The children were afraid of the silence.

So there were only a few trails that entered the woods from the school grounds and most of these were badly overgrown and seldom more than a few hundred twisting yards in length. Larkin and Tallsman searched these trails again and again. They called out: "August—where are you?—it's me," and listened to the gentle echoing of their own words. Then they'd leave the woods and search the grass that grew tall as a grown man's waist and skirted the trees and would find nothing there and would return to the woods and the voices and the silence. And would find nothing.

Tallsman said, "I give up. We're not going to find him."

"He's here," Larkin said.

"Of course he's here. But what does that mean? It means he doesn't intend to be found."

"I know he's here," Larkin said. "Come on, let's try the woods again."

Moving ahead, they entered the woods. It was nearing sunset and the trees as tall and massive as giant sentries almost succeeded in blocking the last faint rays of the departing sun. Larkin walked carefully behind Tallsman, guarding his steps with caution. It was quiet here in the woods. Larkin liked that. He was not afraid.

But he was tired. This kind of exercise was not meant for a man eighty-two years old. His feet felt as heavy as lead weights. His arms and shoulders ached and burned with each new step. But the boy was here somewhere, and

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he had to be found. Larkin cried: "August—where are you?—it's me."

And heard nothing.

This trail was not long. A fallen tree blocked its end like the knot at the tip of a string. Beyond the tree grass grew thick and tall.

Tallsman called out: "August—where are you?—it's me."

And heard nothing.

"Let's rest," Larkin said. "I can't move."

"All right," said Tallsman.

They went to the fallen tree and sat. Larkin was far from comfortable but the tree was better than the bare ground. The wood was old and rotten and the bark was moist from last night's rain. A slug moved in the shadows, crawling forward on its belly, cautious and slow as a marauding scout.

Tallsman said, "Have you ever noticed? Slugs here grow bigger than snakes. It fits, doesn't it?"

"I like it here," Larkin said. "Slugs don't hurt."

"Why do you want to find him?"

Larkin shrugged. "I don't quite know. Because I don't want Milinqua to find him. I was born eighty-two years ago. I can remember when things were good. Now that they aren't good, I'm bitter about it. More than you."

"We found him together, but I still don't know. What is he? I don't know. He could have come from another world for all I know. Maybe he did."

"He didn't."

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"Well what is he?"

"How should I know?" Larkin faced Tallsman and shook his head at him, then he turned abruptly away and stared into the distant swaying branches of a faraway tree. He did not like Tallsman and never had. He had originally hired him with strong feelings of uncertainty. Now he was convinced that his feelings had been legitimate. Tallsman did not belong here. He would be happier elsewhere, at a more conventional school, at a government school for that matter. Corlin did not like him. Did anyone? Larkin thought. Yes—the children liked him. They rated him near the top every year and once, Larkin recalled, Tallsman had topped the student poll. Four years ago. Last year he had either run third or fourth. But that wasn't him. That was the subject he taught. It was enormously popular and particularly close to Larkin's heart. He knew the subject more thoroughly and intimately than Tallsman ever would. He had lived there when it was happening.

"Are you trying to tell me you haven't any idea?"

"If there's anything I ever want to tell you, I'll tell you," Larkin said. Then he looked away. That was all. This had been a great country once. Not so many years ago, it had been a bearable country. And what was it now? Larkin blamed the war more than anything. Wars always made a country worse. But for whom? Not for those directly involved. The Canadians were claiming that the soldiers weren't real men any more. It had been years since the last time Larkin had seen a soldier. He almost believed the Canadians.

"Let's go back," he said.

Tallsman said all right and stood. He

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went ahead and Larkin followed him. Tallsman wanted to talk. "Don't you think it's odd that Milinqua would come here today? We found August four years ago and he's never wanted to see him before."

"That's right."

"So where has he been?"

"He's been right here. Attending school."

"Not August. I mean Milinqua."

"Everyone knows Milinqua."

"Forget it," Tallsman said.

It was very dark now. Larkin glimpsed the soft blanket of a clear night sky hanging above the grasping tips of the tallest trees. Once he tripped over a trailing vine and nearly fell but Tallsman caught him in the nick of time. After that, Larkin stepped cautiously, inspecting the ground with his toes before trusting it to receive his full weight. Tallsman walked ahead with the short solid steps of a tired man. Larkin followed.

"Listen," said Tallsman, and he stopped.

Larkin stopped too. And he listened.

"Hear that?"

"Yes," Larkin said.

"Do you understand?"

"It's not English."

"No, but I—"

"I understand too."

A voice was singing. The sound drifted lazily through the trees. The voice was lovely, singing. It sang of time, as cool as the wind, as dry as the desert. As soft and clear as a nearby whisper.

"Over here," Tallsman said. He waved at the edge of the path. "I'm going." He went, forcing his way through the underbrush. He was following the voice, but not Larkin. Larkin stood and he listened. He had never heard anything like this before. Never. As simple as that. If the voice refused to stop, if it never stopped, then Larkin would refuse to move. He would stand rooted here forever among the trees and flowers and vines and ferns. As he listened, he also heard Tallsman plunging through the forest like a haunted animal. He hated Tallsman right now, his desperate thrashing, but what could he do?

The singing stopped. *Click*—it was done. Larkin raised his fist to his mouth and bit the knuckles. He closed his eyes. When he opened them, Tallsman was standing before him. Tallsman and Melissa. He looked at the girl.

Even now in the twilight of his life, Larkin knew each of his pupils clearly in their unrestrained singularity. The day before, if asked for a description of Melissa, he would have replied: She's a small girl, not tall, but strong, with a lean firm build like a young deer. Her hair is black and cut short, close to her ears. Her features are thick and heavy, especially her mouth and lips. She is of moderate intelligence and sometimes her eyes seem to sparkle. But they don't. They twinkle.

In other words, not an exceptional child. A girl. Thirteen years old.

That was yesterday.

Today, Larkin gazed at the girl who faced him and fell helplessly in love with her. Here was a woman of true and exquisite beauty, her eyes dancing with grace, flowing with deep wisdom. A beautiful woman. Her lips parted and her voice sang words that moved

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as smoothly as the waters of a still lake.

"What?" said Larkin, who had not understood. His own voice seemed coarse and brutal.

"Only her," Tallsman said. "No sign of August."

"Get out of here."

"What? Where?"

"Find Corlin. Bring her to my cottage. Go to town if you have to."

Melissa siad, "What's wrong, Larkin?" Her voice reached out and clutched at him. He had to struggle to separate the meaning from the song.

"Melissa. I want you to come with me to my cottage. Will you do that?"

"Yes. Of course."

"Tallsman—get out of here."

Tallsman went.

Then they were alone. Larkin took the girl by the hand and led her down the forest path. She followed compliantly, matching her step to his. He did not think of August now, for he no longer cared. Instead he thought: This is it. The moment my life has been waiting for. I have seen it now. I have seen the one who is rich and whole and full. I have seen perfection in a human being. She is the one, and she holds my hand.

They emerged from the woods. The sky was clear and cloudless, filled with distant shining stars and a shred of the moon. The silken web of the sky swept down and wrapped the cooling earth in its folds.

Melissa called on him to halt. He turned and saw that she was naked. (Had she been before?) Her body was still that of a young girl, a young deer, but something more had been added. Larkin sensed that he was gazing upon a woman so beautiful that she defied conventional description. Her beauty came from within, yet it penetrated and encompassed all of her. The moon's light caressed her, circling her breasts; it danced at her hands.

"You're worried," she said, coming forward. His hands went to her hands and she raised them to her chin. Her lips. "Oh Larkin, I never knew it could be like this. Thank you oh thank you for everything." She kissed his fingers.

"Would you like to love me?" she asked.

He did not reply. She kissed his hands.

"Please," she said. "It would help."

"I can't," he said. He drew his hands away from her lips. "We have to go." He turned his back. He moved away toward the school.

"You're not telling the truth," she called after him.

In the darkness, he nodded. But still he went away. After a moment, she followed.

Chapter Eight

Corlin McGee: Nine Thoughts in Soliloquy

In the darkness of the room, behind the shuttered windows, with herself, himself and the bed. And here at her side lay Sheridan emanating that singular smell of his. Was this the smell of man? Or merely another musky stench? His legs, ripped by popping muscles, poked loosely from the bottom of the sheet that served to conceal them both. Corlin on her side, curled tightly, with her knees against her breasts and her fingers on her thighs.

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Corlin who had turned her back to him so that only an odor served to verify his continuing existence. So here she was with this big strong stink and not yet sleeping.

Clark, what is it? What does this girl find in you? Haven't you ever wondered, puzzled, given it a brief measure of your whitest thoughts? Here—let's try. Why not? Let's see if we can find together a likely solution.

Is it your body? It's true that you're big and strong and powerful with ripping popping muscles but is this what a girl like Corlin McGee would seek? Your cock is long and thick and wide and red at the end and sleek and slick and smooth and warm. But would this interest a woman of Corlin McGee's cultivation? Is it your warmth and comfort and gentleness? Is it your personality as slick and smooth and unlined as a paved highway? No bumps nor pits nor obstructing points. Could this be the answer, Clark? Is it that she wants someone to talk to? The exchange of thought and feeling and concept, the sharing of knowledge so valuable to any sane human being? Surely Corlin needs this too. But you, Clark? Isn't there someone else a bit more suitable? Tallsman, for example, despite his wife? Now there's a thinker, but she has asked him and he has refused. You didn't know that, did you, Clark? It bothers you. Admit that, Clark.

It doesn't bother him, Corlin told herself.

If she didn't know herself, how could she expect a big slick insensitive machine like Clark Sheridan to know? Of course he didn't know, she thought, carefully lying in bed, tautly controlling the pace of her breathing. The answer, if anywhere, lay in her past conditioning. Didn't most everything lie there?

She thought back. Her eyes clamped shut, and she watched the pictures as they came, a pale shrunken face with bright sparkling eyes and clumps of white hair that shook explosively like Roman candles every time he moved his head. Here was Larkin, obediently demanding, shouting, screaming: "And then, Corlin, think. You move a foot, tickle, toe, tickle think."

"I cry," she said, eyes clamped shut, seeing the pictures, and here was a child pulling across the ground on dumpy stumpy arms.

"Cry," said Larkin.

"Oh no no," weeping like a baby. "Oh no no," body trembling, because the immensity of this grief, anger, fear was too great for the tiny fragility of the baby's birthed body.

"Corlin, cry, please, cry, try, think—and then, and then . . ."

Nor was that all. There were many other pictures she enjoyed too. There was Larkin with his hair slicked down and parted in the middle sitting at his big brown desk with his hands moving like forks in the air and saying, "A child cannot normally remember his first few years because he lived in a totally different world then. His senses relayed the raw data of this world to his brain, but he possessed no preconceptions with which to interpret this data. All that he had was what was actually there. So as he grows older and develops these preconceptions the memories that do not conform to his new world view are rejected, forced

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down so deeply that they can no longer be consciously resurrected. The world immediately past birth is dispensed with as a falsehood. But it is all there, Corlin. And beyond. That is the part where I have succeeded. By going beyond and seeing beyond. And you—"

In the bed, tonight, with the single white sheet draped across herself and himself, Corlin completed this sentence. The wind pressed gently at the shuttered windows, creeping, whisking, and her voice, speaking aloud, barely a whisper: "And you have gone farther than anyone."

I have.

But, Larkin, isn't that why you accepted me? I was your star pupil and now I'm allowed to run the sessions while you pace the school grounds, talking and laughing and patting your children in your grinning distracted fashion that they can sense and feel but not quite comprehend.

Here stood Corlin McGee's greatest obstacle. She had gone farther under Intensive Therapy than anyone before or since. When Larkin finished with her he had declared, though never aloud, that she had probably gone as far as anyone ever would. Corlin was it. She was healthy and happy and whole. She was a human being, more complete and full and real than any who had come before. This was what Larkin had told her. And she had believed him, knowing of her own ability to exist simultaneously within all lives, states of beings, planes and levels of true consciousness. All of it. And what else could there be?

So now look at her. Here she lay on the bed, this product of a great man's searching dream. If Larkin were an inventor, she might have been his steam engine, or electric light, or if he were a painter, his Mona Lisa, or a general and Waterloo, or a novelist and *A la Recherche du Temps perdu,* or a filmmaker, *Intolerance.* She was the masterwork of a genuine genius, and here she lay, wondering exactly why she bothered to go on thinking.

She could not exist alone. She needed the others. Or, just one other—that would suffice—a single person with whom she could share the vast infinity of her private universe. She was looking for love; she was. This was the answer she gave herself. Just moving along and looking for love. Pushed so far by Intensive Therapy (and it worked, it did), allowed to glimpse the way it ought to be, then returning to the real world and looking and finding it not like that at all. Therefore, she lay here. Therefore, her thighs were damp and sticky. She could not move. She was here for that.

Clark Sheridan was not the first one. That, too, was a custom of the time. To continue seeking the proper one until he was found, or you got bored with the quest, then into marriage (though most never went this far), and then into a final and ultimate sharing that proceeded inevitably toward death. But Corlin was handicapped by the fact that the object of her search was greater than anyone could hope to find, so perhaps she deliberately settled for something very much less. Like Sheridan. Not that Calrk was especially awful. He wasn't, and she liked him. But his vision was dim.

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And, too, he followed the customs of his time with a relentless urge toward total conformity. So twice a month at the least he traded her to his friends in exchange for whatever they had to offer. The friends expected it. Both male and female. How else was one to find the perfect mate unless one searched everywhere? And what was the need for exclusiveness? If one wanted that, then there was marriage. Right? Wasn't that the custom of this time? Of course, yes, right, and that was what marriage was for. Passed around like a fast burning candle, poor Corlin, and she got a chance to meet the townspeople this way—Sheridan had no friends at the school—and they treated her roughly, exposing their proper contempt for Larkin and all he stood for. And it was bad, yes, getting worse, and night after night her thighs remained damp and sticky.

A sea of faces, arms and legs, mouths and lips, eyeballs rolling in a sea of pale flesh. She smiled at some, laughed at herself, watched the passing parade, the endless newsreel of memory. So why not? It meant nothing to her. It was really quite meaningless.

Not a one of them meant a thing to her.

For all of this, why not rape? Now there was an act that really diverged from the accepted customs of the time, but she knew it happened still; it happened often. A dark man looming from behind a shrouded tree, grasping at her with demanding hands, laughing, ripping her clothes. Would she scream when it happened? No—that would not help. There was no one near enough to hear her cries. Now she was running, but he caught her, cold hands at her throat like ice, weight crushing the air from her lungs, and his fingers tore at her garments, shearing off strips of light satin cloth that rose, dancing, fluttering, twisting in the nightly wind, his nails slashing the flesh of her arms and shoulders and back and breasts. And he looked just a little like Sheridan, but the dullness was gone from the eyes, replaced by something bitter and raging, yet sweet. And he slammed into her without prelude or wound. Or did he? Damn it, no. He did not. He drew a knife and held it to her neck. He told her either undress or I'll carve my name on your white throat. She undressed, moving slow, making him wait, taunting him, tormenting, but it was done soon. Then he told her exactly what he wanted her to do, and she did exactly that (or else), exactly as he asked, and finally began to scream, unable to bear it, because this was no better (nor worse) than the bed.

"Corlin," said a voice.

She opened her eyes to the light.

"Corlin—I'm sorry. Will you come with me?"

She patted the bed. Sheridan was gone, so she must have slept. "What do you want? How'd you get in here?"

Tallsman said, "Sheridan let me in. Now please. You have to come."

"Come where? And why? What is this?"

"We found Melissa. Larkin says come right away. I have my car."

"Oh, all right. But give me a minute." She got out of bed, unselfconsciously nude, and went to dress. Her clothes lay neatly folded on a chair. As she dressed, she became aware of

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Tallsman's gaze but she was also aware that her nakedness meant little to him. He was patiently waiting for her to finish and be ready. He was in a hurry; she was on his mind. So he was looking at her. That was all.

"Let's go," she said.

They went into the living room. As they passed, Sheridan smiled and waved at her. He had opened a drink and was sipping it. He lay flopped over the big red chair like a misplaced throwrug. She smiled back at him and waved. Tallsman averted his eyes, and they went out.

It was an eight-mile drive to the school and the road was thick with mud because of last night's rain. Tallsman, driving cautiously, never exceeded twenty-five. Corlin yawned and peered at the clear night sky. She looked at her watch and it was only eight o'clock. She should not have slept. She should have gone out and avoided this.

"I think it's over," she said. "The rain."

"I hope so."

"Tell me, then. When we arrive, I want to be prepared. I have to know what happened."

"Do you mean that?" Tallsman handled the car in a funny way, with both hands tightly clamped to the upper portion of the steering wheel. It seemed excessively cautious to Corlin, almost feminine, and she didn't like it.

She said, "Of course I want to hear."

"I thought you did," he said, speaking softly, pausing between words as if subjecting each sentence to a second, polishing draft. "To begin with she was beautiful. Changed—no, that's not enough—transformed. Even Larkin noticed, though he didn't notice that I noticed. It was funny. From the moment I found her crouched down beside a tree until I was driving here, it seemed like I was moving in a dream. One of those dreams splattered with thick fog that confines your every step. I could talk and move. I could even think—after a fashion—and I was fully aware of everything that occurred around me. But it was funny. I couldn't manage to take a second step. I couldn't make the events I was witnessing have any particular meaning for me. Do you understand?"

"Go on," said Corlin.

"On the way here I got the car stuck in a mudhole, driving without thinking, and I had to wait until a farmer came along in an old truck. The farmer was surprisingly friendly and he gladly helped me out. While I was with him, talking, acting, participating, everything suddenly broke free of the fog and I began to understand part of what I'd seen."

"And what had you seen?" said Corlin.

"Are you sure you really want to know?"

"Yes, and move your hands. Do something with them. Don't hold the wheel that way. It irritates me."

"Sorry." He put one hand in his lap, clenched it, then moved the other to the bottom of the wheel. "What I realized was that the important element was not what had happened. All right, here is the way it was, from an objective viewpoint: August merged himself with Melissa; for several hours the two of them occupied a single body, neither his nor hers; they went away; ap-

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parently they separated after going away; Larkin and I found her; August is still missing.

"But I don't think any of that is especially important. What's important is that a thirteen year old girl has become something I could never be. What am I? Don't tell me; I can answer. I am a dull middle-aged somewhat fat man who teaches small dull children the facts of a dull and dusty and ridiculously ephemeral subject. That's all. And when I first came here, I have a distinct feeling that there was more to me that that. But do you know what's really horrible? I can't remember. I have this feeling, yes, but that's as far as it goes. I know that something originally made me come here. But what? And where has it gone?

"For the past nine years I've done nothing but live my dull stagnant life. I teach my students and I fight with my wife and I argue with my children. I eat, I sleep, I fuck, I shit. Did you know that Stephanie was my second wife? Did you know that my first wife was Japanese? That she's dead? You didn't know that and yet you feel you can form judgments of me. I'd almost forgotten, myself. I wouldn't mention it now, except for a lurking suspicion that it may be important.

"I used to believe that the worst thing that could happen to me was happiness. Happiness meant satisfaction and satisfaction meant complacency. I had dreams then, but what can I say now? I've seen her and she's happy; I'm miserable and I'm supposed to say that she's wrong? Now that's funny. That's hilarious."

The car pulled off the main road and moved down a winding blacktop driveway which led to the main school building. The children played outside and a few of them came to the edge of the road and waved at the passing car. Corlin waved back and Tallsman clamped both hands to the wheel. Corlin wanted to tell him again to use the automatic, but it was too late now. The car went around the school building and parked behind it.

Corlin got out. Tallsman joined her. She asked, "Does he want you too?"

"I don't know," he said.

She looked at him, and suddenly all she wanted was to escape this man who insisted upon inflicting her with his pain and his suffering. Damn his problems all to hell. "I'll go alone."

Turning, she went toward the bridge. Reaching it, she crossed it, then sprinted toward the yellow light that shined from the windows of Larkin's cottage.

She ran, hurrying.

Chapter Nine
Gregory Tallsman: Servants Wept in Vain

By the time he headed back for home, it was nearly eleven o'clock. He lived in a battered red frame house only a few blocks from the neat modern apartment building where Corlin and Sheridan lived, so the journey was short. He pulled into his driveway and watched peeling red paint flicker in the glow of his headlights. He turned off the lights, got out of the car and locked the doors. Above, the sky was alive with the menace of gathering storm clouds, but it wouldn't rain now. In-

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stead, it would wait for morning and the dawn. The clouds flocked to the moon, circled it, then swallowed it.

Plunging through the darkness, he entered his home.

Stephanie was waiting for him in the living room. She was his wife and she sat in a chair. Above her right shoulder a lamp was burning, and they had been married almost eleven years now. She was a tall woman, taller than he by a couple inches, and very thin. Her skin was almost yellow and her hair, piled like a garden atop her head, was coal black. Her lips were narrow. Her chin snapped and shook, trembling with stifled rage.

"Are the children asleep?" he asked, crossing the room carefully. He walked as though he walked through fire and sat on the couch. Stephanie followed him from the corners of her eyes.

"It's nearly eleven. What do you think? And where have you been?" She wore a lightweight gown piled around her hips. She pulled at a thread in one sleeve. "Do you intend to tell me?"

He shook his head. "I'm exhausted."

"And me?"

"And you?"

"How do you think I feel? Don't think I'm not exhausted. You told me you'd be home early. Perhaps by noon, you said. And here you are. And here it is past eleven."

"Did you phone the school?"

"No."

"You should have phoned the school."

"Why? They won't tell me anything."

"Oh bull, Stephanie," he said. He settled back on the couch and ran his fingers over his face, rubbed the pits of his eyes. He ought to sleep. Screw her. How could she stop him from sleeping? Let her rant. He'd fall asleep with her voice tickling his ear. "Look here." He spoke through his hands. "I'm too tired to explain now. I'll talk in the morning. Something came up at school—an emergency—and I was—"

"Was it him? Was it the spy? The child? Please don't tell me. You're involved in that. Oh no." She moved suddenly out of the chair, her gown lashing her ankles, and crossed the room. She moved like an excited cat, one hand spinning in the air, the fingers darting at his face. "Don't tell me." She stood over him.

He put his hands over his eyes. "What are you talking about?"

"I was told. You're having trouble out there. Milinqua came visiting this morning. Don't think I don't know what goes on out there. Don't think everyone in this town doesn't know. Said one of the children was the son of a known spy. They don't want to harm the child, but they do want to find the father. Your Larkin won't give him up. I've never heard anything so foolish."

The room was very hot. He was getting sleepier with each passing moment. Why wouldn't she go away and do something worthwhile? Wash her yellow face if nothing else. "It's not true."

"I mean it's foolish of your Larkin to risk everything—his school, his life, your career and life—for a yak. They won't harm the boy."

"There is no boy. No spy, no yak, no boy. Do you understand me? What you've heard is a lie.

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"Then where have you been?"

"You don't know," he said. He dropped his hands in his lap and looked up at her. Suddenly, as he stared, the years began to peel away from her face, one after another, and soon it was eleven years ago and she was young—twenty-two—and he was six years older. Here they were talking, and her skin sparkled with the innocence of inexperience and her hands tendered his brow. They kissed. Eleven years ago.

"What don't I know?" said her voice, her youthful voice, as quick and daring as a pup.

"You don't know anything," he said, pausing, staring at her, and her smile, beaming, proved contagious, and he found that he was smiling too, and inside he was gently lighted by a glowing flame. "You don't know how wonderful you are. How beautiful. How much I care for you. I didn't realize it myself until tonight as I sat in the car and peered at the night and waited for her, but it was you not her that I really wanted to see. We were children again, and playing, and I was waiting for you to come and join me and make my life real again. She never came, the other one, but I don't care. I'm here with you now, and that's all that seems to matter. Isn't this incredible? I'd almost forgotten. Why are we here? Why are we together? Why do we share this house? We're married—that's why. And I'd almost forgotten."

She did not answer. She shook her head at him, looked at the carpet. Then her lips opened.

He moved from the couch and came to her. He took her red swollen hands in his and raised them in the air, Flesh against flesh, touching. He and she. Staring at her face, he seemed to see two faces, and one was old, and the other was new, but the new one was actually the old one. The old one was the new. It was very complicated, so he smiled and raised his lips and kissed her face. He kissed both her faces.

Then he felt himself moving again. He said, "It's going to be all right. Isn't this what you want? I know it's what I want. Working with Larkin. I've worshipped Larkin ever since I was old enough to read. Taking children who are merely children and turning them into real people. You wait—you'll see. When we get there, you'll understand. Maybe they'll let you teach too. They might. You don't have to have a certificate. It's not required. All you need is a willingness to learn. I'll make it a point to ask. That would really be wonderful, both of us together, and who knows? Maybe later our own children too, and our grandchildren. Who knows? All I know is we've got something good waiting for us up there, and we'll be out in the country, where the air is clean and cool and where you can think and feel. Is there anything else we really need?"

She was trying to pull away from him. His grip was firm. "Let me . . . please."

"Oh. I'm sorry." Releasing her. "But—"

"I want to know where you were tonight."

"I didn't tell you? I thought—"

"No, you didn't."

He nodded. Maybe she was right.

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Perhaps he had forgotten to tell her. The past was gone now; in its place the present stood clear. "I was waiting outside Corlin McGee's apartment. Corlin is a teacher—"

"I know her."

"And I wanted to see her when she got back. Just wanted to see her because they wouldn't let me see. They told me I had to go away. When they needed me, they wanted me, but they never trusted me. None of them."

"What did you want to see her about?"

"About . . . about . . . I can't remember. About something."

"Oh," and she went away. She left the room and there were tears in her eyes when she passed. Tallsman shook his head.

And turned off the lamp.

Then in the darkness he sat in the chair she had vacated. Her smell lay thick around him. An odor of domesticity, but more than that. There was a hint of rot in it. A stench of vague sterility.

The house creaked as all old houses creak on dark nights with the wind blowing, and Tallsman listened to the shifting and swaying of the ceiling and walls. He was not tired now, but he was exhausted. The chair seemed to help. It seemed to soothe the aching in his back and shoulders.

He felt better now, closing his eyes. He had told her now, so perhaps things would improve. There was always a chance of that. Inside him he felt a lingering emptiness and this disturbed him. He knew this sense of emptiness was important, and he fretted. When it was filled at last, then he would sleep. So he waited. But nothing happened.

Chapter Ten

Melissa Brackett: Sold Into Egypt

They kept insisting on wanting to know the answers to the kinds of specific questions that ought not even to be spoken aloud in mixed company, but it couldn't much matter, not even to them, the way they came zinging down and slashing in like so many dive bombers, or maybe more like zipping mosquitoes, it was hard to tell, more like a batch of pesky bugs. She wasn't there anywhere. Back down instead, and sometimes she'd flop on her belly like a fishy fish, or not wondering about nothing, seeing only the inner black of dark swimming wet.

"Can't you please tell us? You're able to talk. Melissa, please. Can't you see how important this is? If they find him first . . ."

Name wasn't Melissa. Name was something else. Name was Oognotta, elsewise. Her name wasn't Corlin either, but Coalter, and why wouldn't somebody inform her of the fact? The boy came up and she couldn't immediately see him in the dark. The other voices chorused around her in their chattering but at last she detected him saying, "I'd like you to." "Oh you would? You? But you're August." "You said you would. You promised if." "But it's raining outside." "It was raining that other time too, and you said you would." It would be intriguing. With him. Why, did he even have one? There had never been a definite trace of evidence. She would soon discover, crawling out of bed, slippery sheets like

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ice, and those others would have plenty to chatter about tonight.

Everyday is the same here. Never any change, nursing one and another. Hate them, mouths, lips, eyes. Hate oh hate. One like all the others. Here, stop. Bastard. Lifting, rising, lights in her eyes, everything light bright shine, all shine light bright glow. *This one's a girl, but all the same. Here suck your nurse wet breast.* Crying. *Calm all right easy.*

Scampering through the mud, she dragging his hand and giggling, him just running. "Tallsman's got the watch tonight and Tallsman's a prude. He'll be coming, so I hope you're quick." "Quick?" "You come fast, but you wouldn't know yet." "Here we are." The bush ducked beneath, covering them, the smell of leaves and soil, *pitter-patter-clap-clap.* The glorious rain! She was wearing only her pajama tops, her green panties, her slippers. Not too cold, so she removed the pajama tops and turned so that the light from the dormitory spilled across and illuminated her breasts. "What's that?" "My titties," she said. "Oh fuck, my breasts." Revolted by her own cuteness. Well, he made her feel dumb this way, so much like a child himself with she his teacher. "When I get bigger, they get bigger. Have you seen Watson? She's got them hanging down round her waist like inner tubes." "Will yours do that, like the tubes?" "Hope not, but they're getting bigger every week, and they hurt a little growing all the time."

She hated this old man with his twisting curling white hair dancing in clumps off his pinkly spotted head and always muttering.

"Melissa, you have to tell us. Please. Can't you talk? Joyce, you said she talked to you."

"She did. She . . ."

"Well, I think we've lost her now."

"No—here—let me try."

But he turned out pretty good. She got to like him with his everyday.

"Don't you want to take these off me? And don't get them in the mud." "Why? Can't you?" The smell of rhododendron like wet inside. Dirt, and listening for pattering Tallsman, approaching, nose dragging the muck. "You don't know anything about this? You haven't ever talked with them?" "I do I do but this isn't the way I."

They moved around her, blocking the light, circling the light, and she'd have told them but she wasn't sure he wanted them to know. He was there still, down and down, taking part, listening, then explaining.

Should I tell?
Why? They won't hurt you.
Coalter is afraid.
That won't harm her.
Should I tell them that?
No.

So much different now. It was he who was the teacher and she who was the ignorant lacking pupil. But she did not mind. For the rest of this universe, as far as it was concerned, she was a teacher of great sensibility, greater perhaps than any it had ever seen before. To learn, then teach. From him, to the others.

She spoke aloud: "I am the one."

And was shocked at the abruptness of the answering outbursts. "Tell us please. You can understand. She can understand, Joyce. Make her talk." "I

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knew it. Tell us." "Yes, please tell us. Where is August?"

But she did not speak, for she was again down and down.

It was out now in the cold wind. "Kiss me here." "Why?" "I want you to. It makes it better." "I don't want to do that." "Oh all right but next time. Promise me next time." "Yes." "I want to see, though." He let her see, poking forward into the spilling light. Well, he had one. This was one, but it was not the same as the others she had seen so close. Twenty-four boys and three grown men. It seemed to have its own reflection. How odd, because of the light. Her thighs came open and she drew him down. Stroked his pimpled back, said, "Put it there." She stroked him down and pushed it up against her own until she was wetly sticky. Then in. "Now move . . . now . . . ah oh." But the words lacked force this time, scrunched and in.. Yes,. there it felt. "Move." And: "Why?"

The sky opened. The clouds withered. (It was really happening this way.) A voice stung something banging oh no she melted in and his teeth were in her mouth lips once and then coming more than she was down and down arms melting flowing what? "Let me up!" "I can't—no—this is the way." Mouth in breasts inside wetly inner tubes. *August. August.* His mind and she part of it and see twice smell and feel.

Then black.

Later Tallsman.

But she returned again to the beginning in order to know and know from the down and down.

Melissa Brackett sat silently smiling and glowing in a soft chair. Meanwhile, midnight came creeping.

Chapter Eleven

CHORUS: SUN KING

MIDNIGHT CAME CREEPING across the land, following the course of times past and present, crossing from the east and west, darkening this part of the earth—*done*—then moving on to the next, never pausing, never truly finished, always westward. The island which housed the school would be one of the last places touched by the shadows of midnight before they vacated the land entirely and swept darkly across the face of the great sea, where creatures lived to whom time meant nothing, midnight or noon, all the same, and a touch of faint light brought instant death.

In the dormitory the wings were dark and the checkers stood outside thick latched wooden doors, listening, and when they heard the first tentative whisperings from beyond, they nodded their heads, for this was what they knew and expected and, satisfied, they went to their seats and sat and smiled and shuffled and began the long vigil of waiting and watching that would not end until the break of dawn.

Wthin the south wing of the dormitory, where the advanced students waited, the talk was concerned with the subject of life itself, with the weather and the women, the classes and the conflicts, the men and their times. One boy, seventeen years old, wanted to know why General Riley had not appeared at a public dedication ceremony in Old Washington that week. Could

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it be significant? Could it mean a change in the ruling structure? Another was more concerned with Gregory Tallsman's class in Cinematic History and Technique and why the films had been so poor the past few weeks. Another said they were actually fairly good, if not exactly great. These were the big kids, both boys and girls, and they talked the big talk. They were adults concerned with issues of substance. All had been through the most intensive of therapy, and there wasn't an unaware apple in the whole big basket.

In the north wing, the talk was different. Here the children leaped from their bunks the moment the lingering footsteps padded away, and they scampered to a far corner, where a trace of light slanted through a partially open window. One boy sat in the center of them all. The boy was tall for his age, a little fat, and freckled. In the dim light he waved his hands like a saint calling upon heaven for beneficial guidance.

—If we don't want to lose it, then we've got to do something I'm telling you. It's strictly up to us (said the boy).

—But how can you be sure? (asked another).

—I was there, I tell you. I heard the whole damned thing. Milinqua said he was going to arrest August, and Larkin too, and then the school will close, and how will you like that? You want to go home and play with your real family? You want to go to a government school and end up fighting the yaks?

None of them wanted any of this.

—So we're all here. We're the ones. The advanced won't help, because they don't know August. I have some ideas, but I'd like to hear some other opinions before I speak.

—We could turn him over.

—Who said that?

—I did.

—Are you joking?

—The school won't be closed.

—Then tell me where he is.

—How should I know?

—Because how are we going to turn him over if we don't know where he is?

—Ah, I don't know.

—Then listen to me. All of you listen. I say we've got to make a deal with them and we can't do that till we've got a good strong hand. We've got nothing they want from us except August and we don't know where he's hiding.

They all agreed with this.

—Fine. So listen to me. I say what we do is we kidnap Milinqua. I've seen his office and it won't be hard. Take him into the woods and hold him. I know a place. When they agree to issue a proclamation dropping all charges against August and Larkin, then we let him go.

—Steven, that's . . .

—Will you listen? Shut up. What do you think? I've had all day on this and I've thought it through. I know what I'm saying.

(And he did too, or at least he was able to convince the others of this, but we won't bother listening to his plan, because it's always better to see things as they happen rather than hear first about them when they still exist only as part of the possible future.)

Outside, a rhododenron bush sat

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coldly beneath the faint light cast by a few stars in a misty black sky. Clouds circled and concealed the moon. The smell of approaching rain lay heavy in the air.

Beneath the bush, two children lay entwined. Both were in their late teens, and from the way they moved it was clear they were experienced at this and well known to one another. They did not speak. Their rhythms matched, their hands clasped, perhaps he murmured her name once briefly, speaking into the warm flesh of her shoulder, and perhaps he quivered once, and perhaps he moved away too quickly and too silently when it was done. She turned her eyes away from him and stared at the darkness. Then she jumped and grabbed him, clinging. She said:

—There's somebody out there. Watching us.

—No. Who? A checker?

—A boy. A lower. But he's gone now. When I saw him, he ran.

And midnight arrived, but no one noticed. Not in the white cottage across the creek, where Larkin and Corlin hammered away at their witness, who sat silently glowing in the warm light of her own blossoming beauty, who had no need to answer as she relived her life once again, and again, seeing and hearing and experiencing more and more each time. Not in town either, where Clark Sheridan prepared for bed, wondering if he ought to leave one light burning for Corlin. (He ought not.) And certainly not a few blocks farther down the road, where Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Tallsman tossed and twisted in separate beds while nearby their children soundly slept, dreaming in colors of a shade and tone no longer remembered past the age of nine.

Midnight arrived, sweeping across the land like a black fire, and then drifted gently toward the beckoning sea. There it was home, and then it was gone.

SECOND DAY

Chapter Twelve
GREGORY TALLSMAN: WINTER SUN

SITTING. AND WAITING. The car holding tight around him like a protective metal shield, thick and full as winter but warm inside, and the video box in the dashboard spinning pictures of leaping dancers whirling against a churning background of music and sound. *The winter sun is crying night —oh the richness deathly bright.* An old song, decadent and proscribed, but a tape that Tallsman had owned unobstructed for fifteen years. He played it now and one of the dancers gleamed abruptly nude and white. *Call the summer; all hail the light—we laugh and we die—'tis relentless but right.* He flicked a switch and the picture paused. The sound ceased, the music faded, then died. Tallsman sat alone.

The rain beat savagely against the windshield of the car. *Ram-plam-smash-blash,* said the rain. Oh damn the rain, thought Tallsman, so where is she? But in that event, if questions were to be raised, what was he doing here? Why had he slipped from between the sheets like ice to go peeping from his door (not here—not here) and

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then down the hallway, scraping at his beard, which obediently flaked against his pajamas, bare chest, clean suit, then outside. What was he doing, sitting in his car outside this looming apartment complex, struggling to see past a windshield splattered with the moist residue of the storm? Why all this?

Tallsman did not know. All he knew was that he had to see her before he could hope to thrive again. Something in the way she'd moved last night. Something in the way her lips had pressed against her tongue, and then she had said he could not see her any more. They had stolen her away from him with the stark finality of a closing curtain, bodies strewn across the dim stage like bits of discarded confetti at a wedding.

Tallsman wiped at the windshield, then ducked down. She was coming at last, both of them together, but he would wait. He would wait and see her alone.

He could not see, but he knew that Sheridan and Corlin ran through the rain and dashed into his car. Tallsman waited, crouched low in the front seat, the tape hanging paused in front of him, a vast glimpse of a dancing navel. He shut his eyes and felt his teeth clashing. The other car started and his ears perked. It moved away, bumping down the slick wet highway. It was seven o'clock. He had let them get away; now he would follow. He knew where they were going. He had risen with the darkness and had moved with the first slanting hesitant light, and now it was time. Sheridan handled the wheel with Corlin at his side, and she (perhaps) put her hand in his lap, demanding comfort, but this poor insensitive man–could no more provide comfort than a corpse could.

It seemed safe now. Lifting himself sufficiently, Tallsman tapped the lever that moved the car forward. The automatic was set for the school, so there was no problem there. He could barely see past the window, the rain lashing at it, painting with invisible hands rich lush designs of clear white on clear white.

He sat upright and alert in the front seat. The car ran itself, but a man was needed to guard against unforeseen dangers. There were none this morning. Not even so much as another car passing dimly through the haze. Tallsman alone with the road, except far ahead the other car, its two occupants, neither of whom was aware of the pursuing presence. Tallsman kept the speed down, and he thought:

He's out there somewhere. August. He could even be watching me right now. And what about the rain? Would the rain touch him? Would he even know it was there?

Tallsman thought not. Not August, who was greater than the storm. That much Tallsman had decided for certain while tossing a sleepless night, Stephanie breathing nearby as though to draw all the available air into her lungs and leave him gasping, straining, suffocating, dying.

He watched the trees flashing past. Each flowed firmly into the next, presenting a united front of green, so that the forest as a whole was an entity but each individual tree was not. Couldn't see the forest for the trees. Or was that right? Or was it the other way around?

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Tallsman wondered about this, not caring, as the rain dripped off the branches and the road churned like a vast mudhole, the car spraying brown as its tires rolled unceasingly toward the school. Watching the road ahead, Tallsman saw that it was empty.

He reached the school, never once catching sight of the preceding car, but that was all right, that fitted his plans. He prodded the car and made it poke its head around the corner of the main school building, then let it rest. By leaning forward and putting his nose against the windshield he could see them clearly, but they could not see him unless they made a special effort. This was fine, and they were there too. He could see them distantly through the haze of the rain. Standing beside their car and talking. Sheridan's hair lay flat and slick against his head. They had been talking for some time.

Then Sheridan broke away. Tallsman ducked down and put his face near the video box. Listening, he heard Sheridan pass. He waited an additional moment, then tentatively lifted his head. It looked good. It looked clear. Corlin was gone.

Leaving the car, he ran for the building. He made it, bounded a flight of stairs and proceeded down a hallway. Here was a door of hard redwood and he knocked. A legend permanently inscribed in the wood declared:

CORLIN MCGEE—Therapist

Her voice answered his knock. "Yes? Who is it?"

"Tallsman."

"What do you want?"

"It's important."

The door opened a crack and he popped through. Inside the room, Corlin turned her back to him and went to sit at her desk. Her face was pink and worn, coldly expressionless, and her hair hung twisted and wet at her shoulders. Her hair reminded him of the twisted clumps of brown algae frequently tossed ashore by the tides of the Sound.

The office was composed of two rooms. The back room was locked, and the front room was cold and impersonal, almost governmental in tone. There was a desk, a typewriter, a large vocorder and several metal filing cabinets. The back room was the therapy room.

"What do you want here?"

There wasn't a chair other than the one in which she was sitting, so Tallsman crossed to the desk and sat on the edge, letting one leg dangle. Sheets of crumpled paper were sprinkled lightly across the flat surface of the desk, so he pushed a few aside and gave himself maneuvering room.

"I'm busy," she said.

"It can wait," he said. "I want to know about last night."

She looked directly at him and shrugged. "Why do you want to know?"

"I'm involved, aren't I?" he said, trying to make his voice firm.

Again she shrugged. "I suppose so, but there's really nothing to tell. She won't talk. Or she can't talk."

"But I heard her talk."

"Don't whine. I know she talked but she stopped. Joyce couldn't understand either." She smiled, looking up again, the muscles of her cheeks straining to maintain the expression. "So you see

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there's really nothing I can tell you."

"Oh, but there is too. It's something else. I've been thinking."

"You've also been following me. I saw your car this morning. Want to tell me why?" Now she was trying to frown.

"I wanted to see," he said.

"See what?"

"You and Sheridan."

"But that's no secret." She was impatient, angry, irritated. "Mind your own business, Tallsman."

"This is my business. Listen. Last night I was thinking. About this whole thing but especially about Milinqua. How did he happen to come here at exactly the wrong moment? August has been here for years. No one has ever shown any interest in him before. Until the night before last, he was an average kid. Well, maybe not average. But not extraordinary either. Right? And yesterday Milinqua came looking for him. Coincidence?"

"Perhaps," Corlin said, not smiling. Nor frowning. "Or fate—an act of God."

"No, not fate," said Tallsman. "Not coincidence either and certainly not God. Somebody told Milinqua what happened under that bush. That's why he came."

"That's silly."

"Why? It's the only thing that really makes sense."

"Perhaps, but who?" Her face reflected determination and commonsense. She held Tallsman's attention with every word. "Only three people know about August. Right?"

"I got that far," said Tallsman.

"Well, I'm not a spy. If you think you need it, I'll give you my word of honor. And you. Are you a spy?"

"No."

"Then unless you're wrong, it has to be Doctor Larkin. Do you think it's Doctor Larkin?"

"Of course not. And stop smiling. It's not funny."

"Maybe not, but it is silly."

"Sheridan," said Tallsman.

"Oh, no," said Corlin, shaking her head mechanically from side to side. Her eyes gleamed with fierce concentration. "It's not him."

"Did you tell him?"

"I did not."

"Are you sure you didn't slip? That first morning. He came and picked you up and drove you home. This morning I saw both of you. Talking."

"Of course we—" She stopped and glared at him. Her face was drawn, haunted; but by what, by whom? thought Tallsman. Simple fatigue or sudden truth?

"Get out of my office," she said.

"If I'm right, tell me. Please, Corlin." He reached for her but missed and slid off the desk. He stood, waiting, leaning against the edge of the wood, both legs balanced on his toes. "I have to know."

"Get out."

"Tell me."

"I don't have time," she said, calmly now. "Listen to me, Tallsman, and try to use your head. It's seven-thirty and maybe it's eight. That means we have four hours to produce August and none of us knows where he is. Only Melissa knows and she won't tell us, and if we don't find him they'll close the school. Now maybe one of us is a spy, it's possible, but I don't give a damn. It's

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not important. Finding August is important. If you have to play detective, do something about that. But leave me alone."

"All right," he said.

"Then go."

He went. Slowly. It had not gone as he had planned, but what ever had? He had intended to tell her he loved her, but the proper moment had never come. Next time. Perhaps then. Perhaps maybe perhaps. She had asked him once, so why not again?

He stood at the door, waiting for her to speak. She didn't speak. He couldn't see her, but he knew she wasn't looking at him.

He moved swiftly down the hallway. He was doing all right until he reached the point where the corridor branched. He paused there and stood with his hands hanging uselessly at his sides.

So which way now? Left—or straight ahead? Outside, the rain whipped against the bare ground—he could hear it—but outside was not for him. But where?

Standing, his head began to bob from side to side as if it were attached to his shoulders by a spring. He looked everywhere there was to look. He even looked up, and he even looked down.

But there wasn't a way.

Chapter Thirteen
CORLIN MCGEE: PRINCESS

CORLIN MCGEE, twenty-three years old and pretty after a fashion, sat behind her desk and watched the door slide open and a head pop through. For several seconds, Corlin McGee and the head regarded each other suspiciously. Then the head moved. It was round as a full moon, white as a morning cloud, and topped with a thatch of bristly orange hair.

"Step inside, Jennifer," said Corlin. "It's time."

"I wanted simply to ensure that you were unoccupied and quite alone," said the head.

"Yes, Jennifer, I understand. But please come in."

Entering the room, the head gently nodded. Jennifer was ten years old and she thought of herself as a princess, which was why she tried to talk like a princess. Actually her position of royalty was more than a thought; in many respects, her claim was quite legitimate. She was a princess—or had been a princess—or would be a princess—or ought to be a princess. Earlier therapy sessions had clearly established this fact, but so far Jennifer had been unable to come to grips with her discovery, but she was young and this would come with time. Jennifer said, "If you please, Miss McGee. The therapy room awaits us. Already, I believe, we are somewhat tardy."

"Come," said Corlin, who went and opened the door to the back room and ushered the girl inside. Jennifer passed in a flutter of terrycloth. She wore a soiled orange bathrobe and had it buttoned around her neck so that it swirled behind like a trailing cape. Smiling at the cape, Corlin followed the girl into the room and locked the door.

The room was bare. It had always been bare, both when it had been Larkin's exclusive domain and lately for the past few years while it belonged to Corlin; there wasn't a stick of furniture in

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the room, not even a rug. The room as a whole measured an exact cube down to the inch. The walls were painted calm white. Originally, Corlin recalled, the walls and ceiling had been black, and later, briefly, they had been colored: one wall red, another blue, yellow, green, and the ceiling a rich flashing checkerboard of all four colors. That had not been a good idea, so Larkin had had the room painted a soothing shade of white. The floor was naked wood.

Corlin went to her place in the center of the room. Going to a corner, Jennifer stood there and put her hands over her face, concealing everything from chin to brow.

"Time was when," said Corlin. She spoke mechanically, like a recording device. How many times had she said, "Time was when"?

Jennifer said, "Time was when and I am when and back—and back . . . back . . . back . . ."

"And out and out."

"Up?"

"Deeply, deep; thinking, think. Now think, see."

Jennifer stood in the corner. In front of her face, her hands were quivering, the exposed flesh flashing brightly red.

Corlin spoke the unlocking phrase: "Jennifer, princess, declaims herself through natural laws. Repeat."

In a faraway but flowing voice, Jennifer repeated, "Jennifer, princess, declaims herself through natural laws. People trickle into the city in order to pay righteous tribute to one who is like God. She cries to them, 'No more, no more.' "

"And the when of then?" asked Corlin.

"It is the I of I."

"The I of I," Corlin confirmed.

And it does work, she reminded herself. How many times a day? Four times, five times, as many as seven or eight? The children came to her and when they left they were greater than before. She could have uttered the phrases without thinking, and often she did. What did they do? Why did they work? How did certain combinations of words, following a single brief session of hypnosis and drugs, allow a person to open his mind and see himself truly? Nobody knew why. Nobody really knew why Intensive Therapy worked. Only that it did. At times, speaking like this, she felt like a mystic, a soothsayer, a prophet. What meaning did her words possess that she could never understand?

"Back," she said.

"To the city where I cry as the flesh of warriors deeply—"

"Farther. Back."

"No I—"

And what was it? Reincarnation? Memories of past lives? Some said this was the answer while others claimed ancestral or racial memories awakened by certain archetypal phrases. Which was the answer? Or neither? Something else entirely?

"Back to the I of the I," said Corlin.

"No! The city where I—"

"Back farther. The I of I. The when of when: *Back.*"

"I can't. No."

Corlin surrendered. "Jennifer, princess, declaims herself through natural laws. Repeat."

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Jennifer said softly, her hands barely trembling: "Jennifer, princess, declaims herself through natural laws."

At least she had tried, Corlin told herself, and she not really expected to succeed. The princess was the first identity Jennifer had found and she would have to overcome the initial excitement of her discovery, made worse in this instance by the glory of royalty, before she could turn backward and seek the next one. There were many yet to find, but Jennifer was young.

Corlin was aware of more than a dozen separate identities within herself. She had even done some research, tracing her family tree back to 1655 without discovering any of her people in the flesh. All of them seemed to exist in a gray, timeless world, and none of them had anything in common with Jennifer's princess. Her people were common folk. The only thread that seemed to bind them was their uncommon plainness. Well, that, yes, but something else too. Three of her people were prostitutes, another was a homosexual, and another, a man, was a veritable Don Juan. Did this mean that these people were a product of her subconscious cravings? That was another theory which had often been raised but invariably discarded. Corlin still thought it might be right, but there was really no way of knowing. And did she really want to be a whore? She hoped not.

The people were not really important anyway. Discovering these hidden identities was only the elementary stage of Intensive Therapy. After them came the visions, the true enlightenment, the ability to use these people in order to help one's physical self. Or at least that was the theory. But was it really valid? She wondered. Hadn't August shown them the true futility of all their years of vain striving and struggling? Had Intensive Therapy outlived its years of usefulness? Was it anything more now than an old and broken man who refuses to admit that he ought to be dead and goes right on living his pointless life?

Jennifer said, "The carriage whirls down cobbled streets, the horses' hoofs clashing against the stones, and my hands waving with silver rings glowing, and a bracelet of fine rubies—or diamonds?—or emeralds?—jewels dancing and gleaming with light—and their cries for me are an ocean of sound beating breathlessly against the cold and irrevocable land."

Corlin shouted: "Back! And back! Beyond and deeply thinking! The I of I stands back!" But she knew it was hopeless. And she was tired, unable to keep her mind fixed to this trash of carriages and kings. She hoped Jennifer would kindly revert to a more interesting identity, anything other than the princess. Such as? Such as even another whore. Anything would be better than this pointless clanking down cobbled streets. And then, this morning, after only half-an-hour's hurried sleep, Tallsman had come rushing in to make his accusations.

Well, of course he may have been right. She did not think so, but it was possible. After all, she had indeed told Sheridan. She remembered clearly now. He had asked—this was in the car on the way home after that first long

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night—Sheridan had said, "What's wrong with you?" and she had said, "Something happened," and he had said, "Well what?" and she had said, "A hell of a mess—with August."

But that was all. He had not pressed her any further, not even taking the next obvious step. Surely he could not be the one, if there even was a one. She thought the whole idea was ridiculous. It was Tallsman's fault. If he had been able to accept the mechanisms of fate, he would have been able to understand.

Besides, he was only jealous.

"Oh? Was he? Of whom? Of her? Oh hell, she thought. So why not admit it to yourself? No one else can hear. You're falling in love with Tallsman. Or, if not love, than this: he's the one person you know whom you can truly trust, and the reason you can trust him is because of his utter predictability. How nice to have a man around, knowing exactly what he'll do under any given set of circumstances. And that's why you're in love with him, Corlin. And he knows it. He's jealous.

Stop.

She stopped. And almost laughed at herself. What was she doing, for God's sake? She was doing exactly what a proponent of Intensive Therapy ought never to do. She was analyzing herself, and she almost giggled at the thought. You should never do that. According to Doctor Larkin, you either see it (and know it) or you don't see it at all, but you can never understand yourself through the processes of logic because the human personality is the most illogical of all mechanisms.

But she still thought he was jealous.

"What's wrong with you?" asked Jennifer. "Hey."

"Back," said Corlin, quickly. "Back, thinking, deeply thinking. Jennifer, princess—"

"I'm not," Jennifer said.

"You're not?"

"I'm me. What happened to you. Why weren't you listening?"

"I was thinking," Corlin said. "I'm sorry—come on." Corlin went toward the door, and Jennifer followed, moving like a small girl. She seemed irritated at the way her robe rubbed against her bare ankles.

"What are you worried about?" Jennifer asked.

Corlin went to her desk. "I didn't get enough sleep last night. That's all. I couldn't concentrate. I'm sorry."

"I understand," Jennifer said. "It's all right. I was tired of the princess anyway. I wanted to move back."

"I tried to move you," Corlin said. "But you didn't want to go."

"Oh, but I did. That was your fault. You didn't try hard enough. I'd do anything to get away from that princess. Nothing ever happens to her. And she's stupid."

"I thought you liked her."

"Dull, dull, dull," said Jennifer. "You can't imagine. The princess is like a robot. Everything here—" she flicked a hand at her cape "—and nothing here." She tapped her forehead.

"We'll try tomorrow. I promise."

"You'll be all right tomorrow? It's August, isn't it? Well, then you'll be all right tomorrow."

"Why? What do you know about August?"

"He's gone, isn't he?"

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"Yes, he's gone. But why should I be worried?"

"You won't be. Not for long. In fact, if I were you, I'd forget it right now and save myself the trouble. Bye," said Jennifer, departing as smoothly as an actress. Her robe trailed ponderously after her. The door closed.

Now the room was very silent. Corlin put her chin in her hands and closed her eyes. She was thinking, analyzing herself, feasting in the joy of this new freedom. How much fun this was and what absurd conclusions she reached. The room around her was exceedingly quiet.

Chapter Fourteen
JOYCE LARKIN: GUARDIAN AT THE GATE

TORN BETWEEN CLOCK and calendar, the fluid ticking hands or the rigid silent numbers, Larkin sat behind his desk with his hands neatly folded and his feet unconsciously tapping in rhythm to a top hit song of the year 1948, a good year, while outside the day had changed into something bleak and nasty which poured down rain and grayness upon the empty land below. Larkin could not help sensing that the rain was surely intended for him alone since it fed the trees and flowers and gave them life, and in turn it sought to murder him. It was an absurd thought; it was the way he felt.

The clock: the clock said nine. The clock paused briefly, cleared itself, then spoke again; the clock said five seconds after nine. The clock went tick and tock and turned and flowed. The clock went faster. It never went slower. Three hours (minus a few seconds) in which to produce the boy. Three hours in which to operate the school. Three hours in which to watch and listen to the falling rain. Three hours and then: well, that part wasn't clear. The clock said twenty-five seconds after nine. And counting.

At twenty seconds after eight, Milinqua had kindly phoned. His tight compressed official face grinned at Larkin from the viewscreen. He said you have only four hours left. Friendly in his greetings, Milinqua added: "We have not been able to discover this boy, my good friend Larkin, and thus it pains me greatly to deliver an ultimatum such as this, which differs in no great respect from the one that I was forced to deliver yesterday. My own feelings cry out as I speak these words. They shout; they scream. No—they cry, for you are my friend, Larkin, and as my friend, our friend, our associate, it ought to be yours to determine your own time scale, and yet my superiors are most impatient men, which is perhaps why they are who they are, and they insist upon this figure, four hours. They are the ones who say noon, and it is I who am sorry."

Thus, the clock.

But the calendar. Here was a reminder of better days. The calendar sat in the very center of Larkin's clean slick desk. There were two notes neatly scribbled upon the top page. One referred to "9" and the other to "10." There was a name after each of these numbers. After the number "9" was the name "Vegas."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Larkin, who imme-

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diately stood and pulled and smoothed his old gray suit with the starched white shirt and the red-and-white striped tie. His shoes were polished clean as glass and his cuffs were hidden beneath his sleeves and his handkerchief was primly arranged in his outer breast pocket. Always a neat man, Larkin, always a polished man. "How are you?" he said.

"Quite fine," said the woman.

"You are Mrs. Vegas?" Tilting his head, Larkin strained to see beyond the woman, but this was not easy, for the woman was huge. Larkin was not especially good at visual estimation but Mrs. Vegas appeared a good three hundred pounds. Her heavy raincoat, soaked by the rain, held to her as tightly as a blanket on a horse, and from between plump rosy cheeks her mouth peeked, and chins rolled endlessly one after another below the level of her jaw. Her arms dangled naked from her sides like twin cuts of choice beef and her hair struggled to maintain its identity in the face of such bulk.

"Dorothy Vegas," she said.

"Of course, and won't you take a chair? I'm Larkin." He indicated one of the straight-backed wooden seats and then waited tensely as Mrs. Vegas squirmed to fit herself into a safe and secure perch. She ended up tilting on the very edge of the chair, her legs serving to keep her upright while she avoided putting so much pressure on the wood that it collapsed.

"Now," said Larkin, "Mr. Vegas."

"He's dead. There is no Mr. Vegas."

"And your son?"

"Theodore. I call him Ted."

"Did you bring him with you?"

"Yes, but he's outside. In that small room."

"I may have to talk with him later."

"Certainly," she said.

"But right now I want to talk to you."

"I see."

"Good," said Larkin, putting a quick smile to his lips and using it to conceal the rapid working of his mind. He had always considered this moment the most essential of the entire process. His methods could never succeed unless only the most capable subjects were admitted. Would Theodore Vegas prove to be one of these? Now was the time to find out.

"Do you beat your son?" Larkin asked.

The woman jerked her head visibly as though searching for someone to answer this question for her. Her eyes, nearly hidden by the swollen sockets, shifted nervously, and she said, "Why, no, never."

"You have never slapped, struck, hit, spanked or kicked the boy?"

"Why, no, never."

"Why not?" asked Larkin.

The woman answered firmly. "I don't believe in hitting."

"How often does Ted masturbate?"

Again Mrs. Vegas searched the room and again she found it empty. Her voice came distantly as though sifted through a piece of thick cloth. "Ted's too young for that."

"Now that's where you're wrong, Mrs. Vegas. Not psychologically speaking."

"I wouldn't know about that," she said.

"Of course not, and one more ques-

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tion—you don't mind—what is the boy's favorite game?"

Mrs. Vegas thought this one over. Finally, she said, "Couldn't you ask him? He might know better than me."

Larkin said, "I don't think that will be necessary. I'm very sorry, Mrs. Vegas, but I don't think Ted would fit here at New Morning. We have—"

"You mean you're turning him down? Like that?"

"I'm afraid so," said Larkin, lowering his eyes, studying the calendar. He dreaded this particular moment.

"You can't," she said.

Raising his eyes, Larkin jumped. The woman was looming over his desk, glaring down at him while gasping for breath with her tiny compressed mouth.

"He's been expelled," Larkin said.

"Yes," said Mrs. Vegas. Backing off a step, she wiped at her nose. "I came here."

"There isn't another school? Besides New Morning?"

"No." Her head shook vigorously. "We went to all of them and all of them said no. They're full with the others. They said go to see Larkin. Larkin has room. Try Larkin, so we came here."

"It was useless," he said, and he nearly began to apologize, explaining to her how his methods demanded a certain basic type of individual as raw material in order to work effectively and how her son did not fit this necessary mold. But he did not say any of this; he stopped himself first and said, "All right—I'll take him."

Glowing from deep within, Mrs. Vegas rubbed her eyes. "Oh—oh thank you."

Larkin nodded without smiling and gave her directions for finding the student dormitory. She thanked him again and asked if he still wished to see the boy. Larkin said he did not think it would be necessary.

When she had gone, he studied the clock. The clock said there were fifteen minutes remaining before it was ten o'clock. Larkin knew a simple calculation would give him the exact amount of time he had remaining but he did not bother to make it. When noon came, he would know it. So why rush it along? Let time take its own time in coming.

His feet were tapping again; his hands were folded. He tried to reprove himself for accepting the Vegas boy, for allowing his emotions to interfere with his work, but he could not do that, because he knew that it no longer really mattered. The boy had been expelled from government school, and according to the law this meant he had a period of thirty days in which to find a private school willing to accept him. If none of them were interested in adding Theodore Vegas to their enrollment—and most were already too crowded and all were too poor and acceptances were more than rare—then Theodore would find himself a member of the national army, conscripted for an indefinite term. But Larkin—good Larkin, kind Larkin, beneficial Larkin—Larkin had saved his life.

And that was all right. That had felt good. And that one other part had felt good too. Asking the questions, getting

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the responses, boring down to the raw basics of the matter, he had enjoyed that; it had been just like the old days. For a brief moment he had nearly forgotten everything else until abruptly reminded of the existence of a real world and then he had accepted Theodore Vegas, but he had accepted him not out of pity or remorse or feeling but simply because he had realized the simple fact that it no longer mattered one way or the other. In the past he had turned down dozens of them without batting an eye, and if necessary, he could do it again, starting tomorrow.

There was a knock at the door.

Larkin said, "Come in, please," and the door opened immediately, allowing a trio of sleek, well-groomed, smartly-dressed, well-fed young people to come sweeping into the room. One of the three was a woman and she took a chair, sitting stiff and straight, while her two male companions stood nearby poised like cats. The older of the men—he was perhaps thirty—seemed a male counterpart of the woman, a clean and proud man of obvious distinction. The other man was a young boy.

Larkin glanced at his calendar and said, "You must be Mr. Sarris and Miss Hartley."

"And you're Joyce Larkin," said the mother. There was a hint of breathlessness in the way she pronounced the last words: *Joyce Larkin*.

"I am. Is this your son?" Larkin asked.

The woman turned and glanced at the room as if noticing the presence of other people for the first time. Her eyes passed hurriedly over the other man and finally settled on the boy. He was small, plainly quite young and seemed to be having a problem with contact lenses. Peering straight down at the floor, his eyes were misty with tears.

"His name is Eugene," the mother said. "And today is his birthday. He's nine years old today and here we are."

"You must have been quite young."

"Do you object?"

Larkin shook his head. He said, "I assume you want—"

"Well, we had heard that you might consider it. Under certain circumstances and, well, we preferred not to wait. Not that we're eager to see Eugene go—but, well, we just wanted to come and see. We agreed that it would be best for him if he spent a year here before beginning his therapy sessions. To become acquainted with you and the school, as you said in your book."

"Which book was that?" Larkin asked.

"Let me see." She laughed uneasily. "This is really embarrassing, but I don't seem to remember. But you did say it, didn't you?"

"Yes, I said it."

"I was certain you had. I've read your books the way some people used to read the Bible. In fact, that's exactly the way I feel about your work. Ever since I was a child myself. It's my Bible, my religion, and I've raised Eugene according to all your precepts. I don't see how he can fail now. I only wish I could have had his advantages. Oh, I don't mean it quite the way it sounds. What I mean is I wish I could have had the chance to come here to New Morning. I went to government school

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and it was horrible and all the time I was reading your books and thinking and dreaming and crying. If I had come here, I'm sure I'd be a whole other person today. Eric agrees. He went to private school but not one like here."

"You feel the same way, Mr. Sarris."

"I think this is a splendid idea," the father said, smiling toward the woman. "I've read several of your books and found them fascinating, even if you are a bit out of favor at the moment."

"We're not worried about that," Miss Hartley said. "We're ready to risk anything in order to give Eugene the best opportunity to live a full and healthy life. We're not afraid of anything."

Larkin nodded. Then he asked, "Do you ever beat the child?" Then, before the mother could reply, he waved his hand at her. "I'm sorry. Of course you don't beat him. I'm sure you wouldn't even consider the idea, and I'm sure the relationship between you and your son is perfectly and utterly healthy."

"I would like to think so," she said.

"So why bring him here?"

She said, "Well . . ." and then paused, as if the question had never occurred to her before. "Well, I guess it's because I believe in you so strongly as a person, Doctor Larkin. I think that's it. I think it's because ever since Eugene was born, even before that, even before I met Eric, always, my whole life I've been waiting for the day when I would enroll my child here. I guess that's it."

"Then forget it," said Larkin.

"What?" she said.

"I can't take him."

"But—but why?"

"I can't explain," Larkin said. "I'm sorry but there is a reason—a good one—but I cannot go into details. Instead, let me offer you some advice. If you believe in me as thoroughly as you claim, perhaps you'll take it. I hope so. My advice is simply this: if you really want your son to have a good education, then take him out of this country. Take him to Europe or go south and find him a good school and enroll him. A traditional school, I don't care. Any school. You people look like you have some money, so maybe I'm not advising you to do something that is beyond your powers. If you can do it, then do it, because it's the only way he'll ever learn anything. It won't happen here in this country, and it won't happen here at New Morning."

"But—Doctor Larkin—what about the therapy?" The man had asked this. The woman seemed too stunned to speak.

"Forget the therapy," said Larkin. "It doesn't work."

They did not believe him, but he would not explain, and finally the three of them left. The whole time they had been there the boy had not once spoken. He had listened to his mother and he had listened to his father and he had listened most respectfully to Larkin. But he had never uttered a word.

Turning to the window, Larkin watched the three of them streaking through the rain, racing toward their waiting car. When they had gone, he turned back to his desk and flipped the calendar to the next page.

Above, the clock was moving. It was past ten o'clock now, well past ten, but Larkin did not notice; he had not looked at the clock. He sat, staring

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steadfastly ahead at the clean open air of his office, sat like a man who was waiting for nothing, like a man who had nothing for which to wait.

Chapter Fifteen
GREGORY TALLSMAN: AND THE ROOM HAS MATCHING EYES

THE LONG ROWS of empty chairs and tables surrounding him seemed to be watching his every movement with sightless eyes and knowing expressions. He moved casually about the room, trying to ignore the objects that watched him, not wanting to give them the least measure of satisfaction, but it was not easy. He was carrying a loose roll of film in one hand, the movie he intended to show his classes today, a short film, one which would leave considerable time for classroom discussion. The film was *Zero de Conduite,* which he normally preferred to hold until near the end of the term, but today was as good a day as any to show it, and so he had decided to show it. Many times in the past his classes had selected it as their personal choice as Greatest Film of All Time, although it wasn't, except to them. Tallsman himself preferred either *Intolerance* or *La Regle de Jeu,* but he did not really care what was considered the best and what was considered the worst. He felt people ought to like whatever it was they happened to like and to hell with everyone else.

It was only nine o'clock. He fitted the film to the projector and checked to ensure that everything was ready for the showing. Then, sitting in a nearby chair, he turned his eyes toward the blank white walls of the classroom. There was still an hour before the start of his first class and he could not think of a single way of passing the time. What he most wanted to do was think about Corlin, but he had given himself a set of strict orders earlier in the day and the strictest of all these orders was the one which said he should not think about Corlin McGee. So he had not and he would not. He was determined. Not her, nor August, nor Sheridan, Larkin, Melissa. Nor any of them or anything about them. He would go ahead with his daily affairs as though nothing had recently happened. If no one wanted his help, then he refused to concern himself with their difficulties. It seemed right to him, and fitting.

But he got up and went to the door. Earlier he had heard a soft tapping sound coming from the direction of the corridor, and just now he had heard it again. Thinking fast, he thought it might be Corlin knocking hesitantly at the door. She had had plenty of time in which to reconsider her earlier words. Perhaps she had finally realized that he was the one person here whom she could truly trust. She had come to surrender herself to him.

He opened the door, wearing a firm expression on his face and it immediately fell away. There was somebody there, but it wasn't Corlin.

Tallsman said, "Mary? Oh. Are you looking for someone, Mary?"

The girl lifted her face toward him, but her glance drifted past his eyes and continued aimlessly down the corridor, swept by a current of its own direction. Her cane scraped against the floor. She

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said, "It was you, Greg. I wanted to talk to you for a minute."

"I'm free," he said. "Come in, Mary."

She started forward, using her cane to detect the width of the door, but Tallsman moved quickly and took her free hand and guided her into the room, found her a suitable chair, and had her sit. After she had, he sat down beside her and smiled.

"Well, what is it, Mary?" His voice was patient.

"Some advice," she said. "I don't know if you can help."

"Go ahead and tell me," he said.

He was really quite accustomed to this sort of thing, because in spite of what a lot of people said, he was a popular man with his students. He felt the least he could do was be a good friend to them, even if he could not be an especially good teacher. Mary Rawlings was the best of his friends. She had come to New Morning at the age of nine and now she was seventeen and ready to receive her certificate. Tallsman thought she was beautiful. Mary was hopelessly in love with him. She came to him nearly every day in need of advice, or a question to be answered, or a doubt to be cleared. Tallsman always tried to do his best for her. She trusted him and he enjoyed her company.

Mary was talking: "And I don't know much beyond that. I mean, I don't know when they're going to do it or what they're planning to do afterward. They're just worried about August and trying to help him."

"Wait," said Tallsman. "August? What are you saying about August?"

"Didn't you hear me?"

"I heard you. But before that. Before what you just said."

"I said I didn't know when they were going to do it."

"Do what?"

"Kidnap the supervisor. Like I said."

"Are you talking about Milinqua? Kidnapping Milinqua? Who wants to do that?"

"A few of the lowers. They want him to let August alone. Do you know why he won't let August alone?"

"I know," Tallsman said.

"Then maybe the whole thing is for the best."

"Maybe you'd better tell me about it," Tallsman said. "And try to begin at the beginning. Tell me everything you know."

Mary tried, but she wasn't very good at telling a story the easy way, and she started in the middle and then worked her way alternately toward both ends. Eventually, Tallsman moved in and guided her in the direction of the proper places.

What he found out was: The plot was real; it had originated with a group of lowers; they planned to kidnap Milinqua early in the day. Mary did not know exactly when. The kidnappers were led by a boy named Steven Radcliffe. Steven had overheard Milinqua say that he intended to arrest Larkin and shut down the school if August were not turned over to him by noon today. Mary had heard the story only a few hours before. At breakfast. And, no, she did not know what they planned to do afterward.

"Do you know where they plan to take him?" Tallsman asked.

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Mary said, "No."

"Do you know why?"

"They want Milinqua to promise to issue a proclamation absolving Larkin and August and everyone of all blame for all acts. That's exactly the way they said it. All blame for all acts. If he agrees, then they'll turn him loose. They don't plan to hurt him unless they have to."

Tallsman laughed at that, and Mary hearing him, jerked her head.

"Are you laughing? Why are you laughing?"

"I'm not laughing at you. I'm laughing because it's so funny. I'm sorry—I really am—I'm happy you wanted to tell me about this."

"Well, I had to tell someone. And I did want your advice. That's mostly why I came. I wanted to know if you thought I ought to tell someone. Tell Larkin, so he can make them stop."

"No," Tallsman said. "I'll tell him. How's that? You probably have a class."

"There's one I've been attending lately at nine-thirty. It's a lower class but an interesting one. They read books out loud, good books usually, and I just listen. It's better than listening to a voice I don't know."

"So why don't you go ahead and go. I promise I'll take care of everything and I'll see you here at ten. I'm showing *Zero* today. You like that one."

"I like the way they laugh at it. It must be a funny movie."

"It is," Tallsman said. "A little."

He assisted Mary to her feet and steered her toward the door. He left her in the corridor but stood and watched as, cane tapping, she moved away, walking firmly and gracefully, without a hint of hesitation in her step.

Then he went back to the room and closed the door and took a chair and propped his feet on a table. He was ready to laugh again but he didn't; he only grinned.

Kidnapping Milinqua. What a delightful idea, he thought. Why hadn't he thought of that? And when was it going to happen? he wondered. Before noon undoubtedly, which meant soon. But what good could it do? None, he thought. It might delay events an hour or two. But that was all.

He knew he ought to tell. But he had made up his mind. He wouldn't utter a word. He did not think anyone was very likely to get hurt. Milinqua was too smart a man to harm any of the children. No, nothing would happen; and if something did, if only by accident, then that would be fine.

Tallsman felt very good right now. He had not felt better in a month. Abruptly, all around him, the chairs stopped staring, and then he felt even better.

Chapter Sixteen

CHORUS: BEYOND THE GATES OF THE TOWER

A BUILDING KNOWN AS the Pelly Tower stood near the center of the island, looming forty-one stories above the floor of the earth, and from the roof of this building, on a clear day, it was possible to observe with the naked eye every square yard of the island's surface, and on an especially clear day brief glimpses of the distant mainland were far from impossible.

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There wasn't another building on the island over five stories high, so the Pelly Tower stood somewhat like a big redwood tree unexpectedly seen in the middle of a stand of dogwood.

The Offices of Local Area Supervision (Subdivision Nine—Forty-eighth State) were located on the fourteenth floor of the Pelly Tower. Unknown to nearly everyone, most of the office space on the other forty floors went unoccupied by special government decree. On the fourteenth floor, during peak afternoon shift hours, a good two hundred men and women labored at various duties, and perhaps another fifty or sixty trickled in and filtered out during the night. These people were clerks, assistants, operators, apprentices, secretaries, girls Friday, boys Thursday, understudies. There was a handful of general superintendents, numerous supervisors, and braces of specialized technicians. By actual measurements found among the original blueprints of the Pelly Tower, it was determined that the second tiniest private office on the fourteenth floor was the one currently occupied by Antonio Milinqua, for twelve years Local Area Supervisor. The smallest private office belonged to an assistant disposal maintenance and lighting technician named David Hawks, but this was because Hawks's office was actually a storage closet and Hawks himself was in reality a janitor. Had this room been serviceable, Milinqua would undoubtedly have occupied it, for he was a cunning man, who valued the importance of anonymity.

The walls of his office were painted bleak battleship gray. There was a neon light inconspicuously located in the ceiling and a brown and green rug. On the wall directly opposite the main door was a painting, a print, which had been there the day Milinqua moved in and which he had never removed. The print, by an unknown artist, depicted a view of three animals lolling beside a still blue river which flowed through a pastoral green valley beneath a cloudless sky. To an unknowing observer, these three animals were plainly fat goats, but Milinqua insisted the goats were not goats but a mutant strain of common milkcow. Since the office belonged to Milinqua, and the painting too, public opinion soon fell into line with this theory. Mutant cows they were, lolling beside a still river which flowed through a pastoral valley beneath a cloudless sky.

There were two doors in the office. The main door (the one opposite the painting) led to a huge chamber occupied by swarms of clerks and secretaries, who chatted and clattered throughout the day, but who never managed to distract the determined Supervisor from the immediacy of his endeavors. The other door, in the left wall, led to the computer room, and this was the heart of Milinqua's entire operation and a door he often used.

His desk was situated near the back wall, directly below the painting. There was a stiff-backed chair hard as nails, where he sat, and a steel filing cabinet (to the right of the desk) with three locked drawers. Two of these drawers were empty. The third held Milinqua's own Individual Personnel File, and today it also contained his lunch bucket. There was a mug of hot coffee

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in the bucket, a jelly roll, and half of a salami sandwich. The bucket was not locked.

At this moment the office was empty. Milinqua, who had just descended in the elevator, strolled across the sidewalk in front of the Tower. He held his head down against the wind and rain, his hands stuffed deep in his pockets. The time was eleven thirty-four.

—Stop.

—What? What do you want, young man. I can—

—That's enough, Tony. See this? Know what it is? Then come along quick and quiet. It's you I want.

—This isn't—

—Maybe it isn't. But now—

That's a toy.

—Maybe. But the bullets are real. Now that's it. That's the way.

—I remember you.

—Sure you do. That's right, Tony. And don't turn around like that again. Keep the hands still. Okay?

—I saw you in Larkin's office. Yesterday.

—You're getting bright, Tony. Now—quick—into the car. Okay now. Down on the floor. Head down. All the way. Okay.

—This is absurd.

—Move. Sure.

—But I can't . . .

—Now that's the idea.

—Trouble, Steven?

—No trouble. Tony here is an all right guy. Let's go. No talking.

As the car rolled furiously across the green tumbling land, never moving beyond the sight of the top stories of the Pelly Tower, nobody said a word. Milinqua lay on the floor in front of the back seat. He was blindfolded and gagged; his hands had been tied behind his back. Steven rode above him and there were two boys in the front seat and two girls and a boy in the rear storage compartment. The car was a stolen vehicle, although the theft would not be reported for another six hours, and it hummed gently as only the finest and newest machinery can hum.

Not far from the boundaries of New Morning school, in the woods, there was an abandoned cabin, and a dirt road let to this cabin, but the road was so badly overgrown with weeds and flowers and grass that it was impassable by any means other than foot. Seven people walked down this road toward the cabin, drenched and soaked by the endless gray rain but exhilarating in the nearby freshness of blossoming nature. When they arrived at the cabin, six of them saw that the roof was badly cracked and the wind and rain danced and whistled and poured through a thousand holes. The walls were barely that, the floor a few rotting planks, and an old broken bed rested forlornly in the center of the room. There was a mattress on the bed, and six of the people laid the seventh atop the mattress, then removed his blindfold and gag. They left his hands tied behind his back.

The cabin was at least a hundred years old, and over the years it had housed a succession of lonely bitter men (and once, fifty years ago, two sour nasty young women). The last of these hermits, a man named Jess Wakely, had been ordered to a retirement home five years ago, and the cabin had

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remained empty since then. Steven knew all of this, but Milinqua, who had given the orders, did not.

—Where is this?

—On the island. In the woods.

—I know every house on the island. This one doesn't seem . . .

—Don't let it throw you, Tony. You're safe.

—What happened to the others?

—I sent them away. They're going to deliver a note so nobody worries about you. The note says we've got you and it says why.

—So Larkin thinks this will work. I am truly amazed. I would never have thought him so naive.

—Hey, give me some credit, Tony. I'm the one who's naive. This plan is my plan.

—But tell me why, young man. Can't you see—?

—Here, Tony, take a look at this. This is a statement I want you to sign, then I'll let you go. Look at this and maybe you'll see what this is all about. Got a pen?

(The statement was one absolving New Morning school, its students, faculty and administrators from all blame for all acts, past, present and future.)

—I can't sign this.

—Well, I can't force you. But there's no hurry. We'll wait.

—Nor can you force me to stay. I've gone along with this long enough, and I'm sorry I have to be impolite and conclude the game so soon, but I really must go back to my office and attend to business. I can assure you that mind cleansing is not a pleasant operation. Nor do I think you are so foolish as to risk a murder charge. Fighting on the northern front is not a very enjoyable task either, I can promise you.

—You're threatening me.

—I'm warning you.

—I wouldn't.

The man stood and began to cross the room. He stepped carefully, walking firmly and decisively, but the condition of the floor made it necessary for him to zigzag in order to avoid the numerous holes. When the man finally reached the door, the boy raised his gun and fired a single shot. The man screamed. The bullet appeared to have struck him in the toe, for he collapsed to the floor like a deflated balloon and hugged his foot.

—You—you—

—Well, I told you I wouldn't.

Meanwhile, throughout the western portions of the North American continent, it was twelve o'clock.

Bong.

—TO BE CONCLUDED—

—GORDON EKLUND

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BOB SHAW

A DOME OF MANY-COLORED GLASS

In his now-classic "Light of Other Days" (1966), Bob Shaw introduced the concept of "slow glass"—glass which transmits light so slowly that in effect it is stored for a period of days, weeks, or even years, releasing at last on its opposite side the sights of bygone times. In 1967 he published his second "slow glass" story, "Burden of Proof;" now, five years later, here is his third. Next month, Shaw's "slow glass" novel, "Other Days, Other Eyes," will appear in our companion magazine, AMAZING STORIES.

Illustrated by DAVID COCKRUM

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.
—P. B. Shelley

THE DUEL BETWEEN The Planner and The Private was entering its sixth year.

It was a quiet, bitter struggle, characterized and made remarkable by the fact that it had lasted more than the same number of weeks. By all the unwritten rules that govern such things, The Planner should have been victorious at an early stage—because all the resources, all the advantages were on his side.

The Planner's name was Lap Wing Chon and, although he was answerable in the long run to Chairman Lin, his reputation in his own province was such that he had the authority of an Emperor. A brilliant civil engineer—the profession had earned him his popular name—he had graduated to politics, earned a reputation as a theoretician and had at one stage of his long life seemed destined to join the chief executive of the People's Republic. His progress in that direction had been checked by the related failings of personal egotism and provincialism, but these very faults strengthened his position with the people of the estuary in which he had been born. The system of flood control installations he had designed and insisted on building, despite certain prior claims the national plan had made on the area's productivity, had saved an estimated half-million lives within five years of its completion. He was tough, stubborn, clever, chauvinistic—and loved by the people. Within the boundaries of his own province, Lap Wing Chon had what amounted to absolute power. He could, for instance, have had The Private executed at any moment during the six long years of their duel, but that was not his way, and not what he had set out to do.

The Private was not a private at all, and it was in the nature of their struggle that only he and Lap Wing Chon knew, or understood, why he was so called.

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His name was Laurence Bell Evans. He had been born in Portsmouth, England, but had grown up in Massachusetts, and had been a lieutenant in the U. S. Air Force when his aircraft was struck by lightning during a flight from Manila to Seoul. It was forced down in The Planner's domain and Evans, the navigator, had been the only crew member to survive the crash. Two decades earlier he would have been transported to Peking for diplomatic auction to his own country, but there had been considerable development and change within the Kuomintang. The airman had no political value, and so his fate rested solely with Lap Wing Chon.

They—The Planner and The Private—had met briefly one afternoon when the former was on a routine visit to the 12th Century fortress which was supposed to be an historical monument, but which served as a convenient place in which to keep a variety of political freaks and misfits.

And the intermittent six-year duel had begun . . .

AT FIRST The Planner's degree of involvement had not been great. The affair had been little more than a stray notion, a whim. He had despised Evans immediately and instinctively for his gangling underdeveloped body, the baby pinkness of his face, and—most of all—for the softness he saw in the airman's nervous gray eyes. That softness, the obvious lack of political or social will, had been an affront to The Planner's whole existence, and something had prompted him to mold the

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clay which had been placed in his hands.

He had begun by presenting Evans with the classical proposition. It was self-evident that the American had been engaged in activities hostile to the Republic. Furthermore, the U. S. Air Force had written him off as dead with the rest of the crew of the lost aircraft, therefore there was no political machinery working on Evans' behalf. He was alone and could be buried without a trace. The Republic was entitled to have Evans executed without further delay, but the humanitarian ideals which inspired the leaders of the revolution prompted them to be merciful. If Evans would confess to his crime, and acknowledge the greater crimes of his masters, he would be returned to his own country immediately.

As was to be expected, Evans had refused.

Lap Wing Chon had smiled patiently, indulgently. And increased the pressure.

It was during the sixth month that he began to realise he had misjudged his man. Evans was politically naive, he was physically weak, he had a great fear of pain and death—yet he had an inner core of certitude, a philosophical armature, which was unbreakable.

"I *want* to sign the confession, I *want* to go home," he used to say, "but we both know it's untrue—therefore I can't sign."

And on one occasion: "If you yourself believed what it says in this paper I might be able to sign it, and trick you, because then it wouldn't be very important. But you know the truth, and I know the truth, so what you're asking me to do is sit down with you and cancel out . . . *willingly* cancel out my entire previous life. This can't be done."

At this stage Lap Wing Chon still thought of his prisoner as "Evans" or "the American"—then Evans was found in his cell one morning suffering from lobar pneumonia. During the subsequent fevers Lap watched over him anxiously, fearing the intervention of death, and during one bedside vigil heard the young man whisper in delirium.

"*Last night,*" the words were barely audible in the long hospital room. "Last night, among his fellow roughs, he jested, quaffed and swore . . ."

The Planner, meticulous in everything he did, wrote the words down in his notebook and later, when he was satisfied Evans would recover, had a search made for their source. It was with some curiosity that he picked up the photoprint brought by his secretary and read a poem called "The Private of the Buffs"; with greater wonderment that he set the sheet aside. The verse—he could not class it as poetry—told a story which had some obvious parallels with Evans' situation. A lone Englishman in the hands of the Chinese . . . commanded to perform the *Kotow* . . . refuses to yield, accepts death before dishonor. The idea that any adult human might be influenced by, and even cherish, the Imperialist principles embodied in the piece both amused and startled The Planner. It also affected his approach to Evans, because he now understood the politically primeval level on which his life and that of his prisoner interacted. This was a

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clash, not of ideology, but of the archetypal Idea.

He allowed several months to pass, then visited Evans in his cell. Evans was not surprised to see Lap Wing Chon because it was during a period in which he was being allowed fairly frequent contact with other human beings. The Planner allowed the conversation to wander aimlessly for a while before he touched on the subject of the poem.

"I think you once told me," he began, "that you are fond of poetry."

"Did I? I don't remember."

"I may be able to arrange for you to have some anthologies."

"Realy?" Evans sounded uninterested.

"Who are your favourite poets?"

"The good ones."

The Planner nodded and examined the wood-grained skin of his hands. "The good ones? What do you think of the distinguished English doggerel-writer, Sir Francis H. Doyle?"

Evans frowned slightly. "As you say, he wrote distinguished English doggerel."

The Planner laughed compliantly. "The Private of the Buffs! The ultimate in jingoism, don't you think?"

"It out-Kipples Kipling. By the way, the word jingoism has been obsolescent for rather a long time."

"Let dusky Indians whine and kneel, An English lad must die! Isn't it incredible?"

"Fantastic."

Evans' reaction had not been what The Planner expected, and so he changed his approach. "Is that how you see yourself, Larry? The Private of the Buffs?"

"You've got to be joking."

"But the parallels are so obvious," The Planner insisted. "The situation is virtually identical."

"No. There's one very big difference."

"And that is . . . ?"

"In the poem, at the private's first refusal to perform the *Kotow* the Chinese warlord had him killed. You see, the warlord was sure of himself—it wasn't all that important to him whether the private of the Buffs yielded or not." Evans smiled, revealing teeth which were beginning to show signs of dietary deficiencies.

"But you wouldn't kill me, would you?"

FOR PERHAPS the hundredth time, The Planner opened the tiny, leather-covered box and examined its contents. Two small glassy disks glowed at him from their nests of velvet. They were slightly domed, shining with every color of life, like cabochons of some exquisite precious stone.

These arrived just in time, he thought closing the box again. *After six years, The Private's health has almost been destroyed.*

He took a deep breath and entered the discreetly positioned hospital room to which the prisoner had been transferred. Doctor Sing and two white-coated orderlies were standing by the bed. Evans was lying perfectly still, staring at the high ceiling, his wasted body covered to the chin.

"Is that you, Lap?" he said weakly. "Got something good for me this time?"

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"Something very special this time, Larry." The Planner opened his little box again and held it close to Evans' face.

Evans narrowed his eyes. "Jewels?"

"Retardite. Slow glass. You're familiar with the material?"

"Oh, that stuff." Evans lowered his head back onto the pillow. "They were making jewelry out of it when I was . . ." His voice faded away uncertainly.

"It has much more important uses now, Larry. Techniques have been developed for controlling the emission of stored light. It is possible to see everything a piece of slow glass has seen, exactly when you want to see it." The Planner made sure his voice revealed none of the excitement and hunger and fear which pounded within him.

"What has that to do with me?"

"Look at the box again, Larry. Look at the *shapes.* What do they remind you of?"

Evans raised his head with obvious effort. "Two little domes of glass. They're like contact lenses. For me?"

The Planner nodded. "Very good, Larry. You're going on a trip."

"Where to?" Evans' voice was guarded now.

"Have you heard of a Vietnamese village called My Lai?"

"I'm not sure."

"Your memory will be refreshed. Your journey will take you to My Lai and a hundred other similar places. In some cases what you see will obviously be filmed material, but as you get more up to date you will be looking through slow glass which was at the actual scenes. You'll be *there,* Larry. As far as the evidence of your eyes is concerned, you will really be present at all these places. Even when you're asleep you'll still be there, watching and watching and . . ."

"What sort of places are you talking about?"

"You'll see. You're going on a conducted tour of those areas of the world which your country has liberated with the aid of napalm and cluster bombs. You're going to see yourself as others have seen you."

"You . . . You can't make me look at anything I don't want to see."

"No?" The Planner nodded, and the two watchful orderlies threw straps across the bed, buckling them down tightly over Evans' chest, hips and legs. Evans responded by rolling his eyes frantically to prevent them being worked upon. Doctor Sing picked up a gleaming hypodermic gun from his instrument tray and fired a tiny cloud of highly specialized anaesthetic into Evans' temple. The rapid eye movements ceased almost at once and Evans' jaw sagged. Using an object like a small, chromium-plated shoehorn, Doctor Sing expertly turned the prisoner's eyes in their sockets until they were staring directly ahead.

The Planner handed him the leather-covered box. "You're sure he's conscious?"

"He is fully conscious," Sing replied. "We have merely deprived him of the control of certain delicate muscles." Squeezing a drop of clear fluid onto each of Evans' eyes, he picked up the slow glass disks with a suction tube and placed them on the immobilized eyeballs. He made certain the disks were properly oriented by checking that

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the red dot on the edge of each was in the twelve o'clock position, and stepped back from the bed. Evans now had brilliantly-glowing multi-colored disks in place of eyes. Sing picked up an object like a black flashlight, moved its slide and pointed it briefly at the prisoner's face.

The jewels came to life, swirling with microscopic movement.

THE PLANNER WAITED until his prisoner had been touring Atrocityville for a full twelve hours, then he returned to the bedside. He gazed down at the bearded El Greco face for a long moment with a mixture of pity and contempt. Evans' mouth was open, his lips drawn back from the blackened ruins of his teeth, and a fine thread of saliva glinted on his cheek. The Planner sat down and put his mouth close to Evans' ear.

"Larry," he said gently. "I'm still your friend, and I'm sorry we had to force the truth on you in this way. I want to bring you back from wherever you are right now—all you have to do is sign the confession. What's your answer, Larry?"

He peered into Evans' face, and into the eyes which were orange ports of hell. The Planner's own eyes widened with shock. He stood up and backed away from the bed, his fingers fluttering nervously to his mouth.

"There's something wrong," he mumbled. "The Private is smiling."

Doctor Sing spoke emotionlessly behind him. "I warned you this might happen, comrade. Your prisoner has escaped from you."

IN THE END, Evans was able to make the transition to psychosis smoothly. There had been a long journey, filled with pain and horror, but all that was behind him now. He was back in England, Queen Victoria was secure on her throne, and soon he would be home. There was only a short distance to walk.

Far Kentish hop-fields round him seem'd,
Like dreams, to come and go;
Bright leagues of cherry-blossom gleam'd,
One sheet of living snow;
The smoke above his father's door,
In gray soft eddyings hung . . .

Brushing the dust from his torn khaki uniform, Private Evans slung his rifle over his shoulder, and strode gratefully into the sunlight of a bygone century.

—BOB SHAW

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Terry Carr first made his mark in the pages of Fantasy & Science Fiction, *a decade ago, with short, neatly crafted and whimsical stories like "Brown Robert" and "Stanley Toothbrush," reminiscent in odd ways of Benchley and Thurber. As if to remind us that he hasn't lost the old touch, he's done it again . . .*

THUS I REFUTE

TERRY CARR

Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA

Broderick Grimes read Descartes, Berkeley and Hobbes like some people eat peanuts. He'd started with a booklet called *The World's Greatest Thoughts* (published at 10¢ in 1928, bought in a used-book store for 15¢ in 1946), had then bought an anthology of illustrated essays, *The Genius of Man,* on sale at his drug store, and had gone on from there. The walls of his den were now covered by jumbled bookcases full of faded and patched volumes whose spines creaked when they were opened. Broderick had read them all, sitting every night in his worn leather chair with the gooseneck lamp curling over his shoulder like a curious bird.

Broderick was nearing the end of *Whips, Chains and Transcendentalism,* a book he considered overemotional, when he felt his ears pop. It was exactly the feeling a person gets going down ten flights in an elevator, but of course Broderick was sitting stationary in his den. He looked around, distracted and a bit annoyed, and saw the stranger standing beside him.

"My greetings," said the stranger with a faint smile.

"What the hell? How did you get in here?" Broderick demanded.

The stranger was over six feet tall, dark-haired, with eyes of a startling pale blue that seemed to glow in the dim light of the den. His attention arrested by those eyes, Broderick was several seconds in noticing that the man had three nostrils.

"I don't believe you'd understand my method of arrival," the stranger said.

"Try me," said Broderick. Three nostrils?

The stranger sighed. "I'm from an alternate time stream, and I arrived by means of a temporal translator. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Not a lot," said Broderick. He marked his place and set down his book on a ledge of the bookcase, next to a small dish with half a cheese sandwich in it. "Are you a building inspector or something?" He decided the nostrils were a birth defect. Weird, though.

"I'm an inspector, you might say."

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Again the stranger gave him his unamused smile. "But I'm inspecting your entire world."

"A census taker? Why the hell don't you knock?"

"Not a census taker," said the stranger. "My name is Yaddeth Omo. I am Ego 27 of the Hasketh Complex, so you can see that only twenty-six people are more important than I."

"You could still knock," Broderick said.

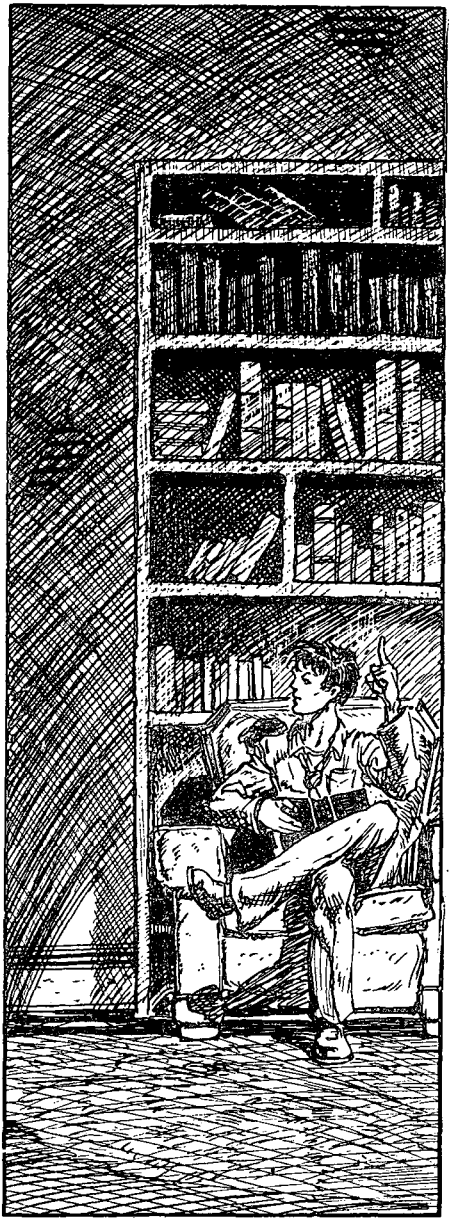
"It's impossible to knock when moving from one time stream to another," the stranger explained with somewhat exaggerated patience. "There's nothing to knock against. But you perhaps heard a disturbance of the air when I materialized here."

Broderick thought back; he said, "Well, my ears popped."

Yaddeth Omo's thin eyebrows raised. "Ah, yes. The abrupt displacement of air in the room caused the air pressure to go up, and your inner ear adjusted accordingly. Very simple."

Broderick thought about that for a second, then frowned. "Are you claiming that you just *appeared* here? Teleported or something?"

"I'll repeat myself for your benefit," said Yaddeth Omo. "I come from a different time stream, another world as it developed when a chance factor of history or evolution changed the course of life on this planet. There are of course an infinite number of such time streams, since at any moment there are uncountable possibilities for variation in the course of events. Time being infinite in width as well as length, naturally all these different things did



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and *do* happen, with the result that there are an infinite number of—"

"I've heard the theory," Broderick said. "It's not well grounded in observable data, though; those who try to make a case for it are imaginative dilettantes."

"Perhaps it seems so in your world," said Yaddeth Omo, smiling tolerantly. "In my world, however, we've proven the theory. And I, in demonstration of Hasketh superiority, have developed a fully workable temporal translator by which we can enter your world. Other worlds will of course follow."

"You mean we're going to be inundated by tourists poking their funny noses in our affairs?" Broderick asked crossly.

"Your world may well be used as a place of amusement," said Yaddeth Omo. "But that won't be your affair at all, since it will be our decision."

"*Your* decision?"

"Naturally. My world, dominated as it is by the Hasketh Complex, has the means to take immediate control of this time stream. We're consolidated, organized for the greatest efficiency, each man graded precisely for his abilities. And even our non-Hasketh echelons are superior in intelligence to your leaders."

"If you judge us by our leaders," Broderick said, "then I'm not impressed by your intelligence."

Yaddeth Omo's mouth tightened and he drew himself up. "I'll warn you only once that it's a serious offense to slight a Hasketh. And I remind you that I am Ego 27, and will rank even higher when my pioneering success with temporal translation is known."

"You mean you're the first to try this thing out?" Broderick asked.

"Naturally. I'd hardly trust the expedition or even the knowledge of my project to a lesser Ego, and a higher-ranked Ego would sabotage my work, or try to take it over himself. So obviously I've had to make the first translation of a human being myself."

Broderick sat back in his chair, picked up his half-eaten cheese sandwich and took another bite. "I gather you've experimented with other things before?"

"Certainly; you ask low-echelon questions. Obviously no one would entrust himself to time translation without first proving its feasibility with unimportant objects or animals. Our researchers—and there have been many of them, some even from non-Hasketh complexes—have worked with temporal translation for decades. We've picked up small objects from your world, and sent others to you."

"What kind of objects?" Broderick swallowed contemplatively, watching his visitor.

"You challenge me for proof?" Yaddeth Omo bristled. "Very well. We have for many, many years displaced from your world into ours such common objects as paper clips, erasers, socks. Surely you've noticed these things missing from time to time yourself, and wondered. We've also sent similar small things from our world to yours—coathangers, for instance."

"You said you'd also experimented with animals. What ones?"

Yaddeth Omo smiled indulgently. "Merely check your lost-and-found columns. We do most of our transpos-

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ing from your world with dogs, which we use as Ego supports just as you do. In return we send to you any kittens that may unfortunately be born on our world, plus of course the fugitive mother cats."

"Oh, you mean that's why we seem to have more kittens than we know what to do with. But why don't you want them? What's wrong with cats?" Broderick took a final bite of his sandwich.

Yaddeth Omo said tightly, "Cats are subversive in a well-graded society. They lack the humility and gratitude of dogs; they're worse than useless as Ego supports." Abruptly he gave a wide smile. "So we send them to you, to undermine your morale."

Broderick finished the sandwich and wiped his lips with a paper napkin. He said, "Mr. Omo, you may think you're being funny, but as you saw, I was reading when you came in, and I want to finish the book tonight. If you're not a building inspector or somebody I have to tolerate in my apartment, I'll thank you to leave. Go make jokes with somebody else."

The stranger stared at Broderick for several moments, then his expression became stern. "You have no right to doubt what I say to you."

Broderick waved a hand. "Certainly I have. I don't believe for a moment that you came from some other time stream. I don't believe in divergent time streams; they're fruit for idle speculation and that's all. I must have left the door unlocked and you just walked in. I don't know why you want to tell me bedtime stories, but with a nose like that I suppose you had to grow up a little weird."

"I'm Yaddeth Omo, Ego 27 of the Hasketh Complex!" the stranger snapped.

"I don't believe it," Broderick said. "In fact, I doubt that you even exist. I probably fell asleep and started dreaming you."

"You doubt the evidence of your own senses?" Yaddeth Omo said. "You see me now, standing before you!" His tone was obviously intended to be intimidating, but Broderick noticed some quaver in his voice.

"Have you ever heard of Bishop Berkeley?" Broderick asked suddenly. He leaned forward again, elbows on knees.

Yaddeth Omo said guardedly: "No."

"I thought not, so I'll tell you about him. He said reality is only what we perceive. For instance, if a tree were to fall in a forest where there was no one around to hear it, would it make a crash when it hit? No, of course not; it's meaningless to say it would. Do you understand?"

"No."

"All right. How do any of us know anything? By seeing, by touching, by hearing or tasting or smelling. Our senses are our contact with reality. If anything is to be real for us it has to hit us, or shine in our eyes, or smell good to us, or *something*. Otherwise it has no effect, which means it's unreal by any rational definition. Reality is what we perceive and nothing more."

Yaddeth Omo tried to glare at him, but it was a rather puzzled glare. "That's not right," he said.

"Of course it is," Broderick said,

(Continued on page 81)

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DAVID R. BUNCH

UP TO THE EDGE OF HEAVEN

Illustrated by STEVE HARPER

SURE, WE THOUGHT we had it, the big win. I won't deny that I thought that. When we got our notices of acceptance it seemed that special seals and certificates must surely have been placed and Joy was coming down to bear us home on wings. And there would be rewards, oh, there surely would be rewards . . .

I got my notice when I still lay all together in a nice sleep like a rock, and there were flowers around me, and a small crowd sitting, and someone up front in a choky voice talking—about ME. Well, some of the things he said about me certainly weren't true, not on either side of the book. But I will say this, he gave me, generally, the benefit of the doubt so that his remarks, in-the-large, were laudatory. And lying there listening with my rock ears and watching the proceedings with my agate eyes what was still left of my concrete heart was waiting for the Call. I knew there were certain things that had to be totted up and the decision might take time. But they'd had three days now, very near, and I wanted that decision. I didn't want to have to come back up through dirt. I'm not a plant! And if I were going the other way—down—well, that was a possibility too stark almost to contemplate at this late and terrible date. But I'll tell you the truth, I almost half expected to go that way—down. Yes, I did! I knew how all those things were sure to be totaled up, and I'll tell you I no doubt had some BAD things against me. But I just lay there, feet and hands like stone, head like a cold lump of lead in all those flowers and faced the possibilities, more helpless than I'd ever been, yes truly, except maybe for those first few months when I was forming up. And even then what I was going to be had life, real physical life. And now I was just an essence, whatever that could mean. And I would have traded it all back just then just to be able to scratch my nose. But nothing that all of them knew, or maybe would ever or could ever know, could make me ever again to raise that rock hand to touch that leaden nose. These bones and meat were done, the muscles and the madness finished, the warts and wants of flesh through; the blood was mostly somewhere down a drain, going for Big River by now probably, and I was braced with fluids I did not own. So I just faced it, rock-faced and cold.

And I got it! Right there when they were singing a song, I got it—my notice of acceptance! "Come on up. Be with us," it said. "New units are forming." —New units are forming?! Huh? —But I did not have time to waste upon that

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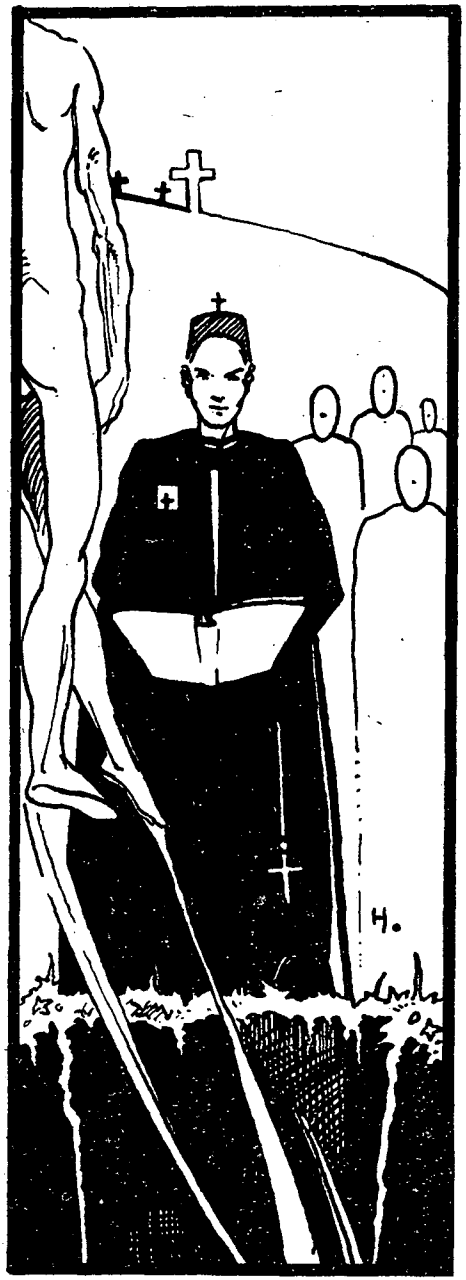
strange and puzzling note at the end. I had the big prize, surely the big prize—"Come on up" not "Get on down." I left out through the flowers, and I didn't move a bloom—just about when the hope song was ending. And I wondered as I left how much longer they would talk and sing at the nothing-now back there. And later they would throw dirt on it, oh yes, a lot of dirt on it.

But it was nice to be out in the sun once again. But not for long. There was a car, a strange and alien car, and it had a big hose out with, on the end, a huge funnel that breathed and sniffed and whistled at the air. I heard a voice say, "It's the best way to get 'em. Sure, we'll get some insect hulls and mouse hairs and ant feelers and other things that won't apply or qualify, but we'll also get this, ha, essence, ha ha." And they did. I was sucked in through the funnel, *schzooomp!* almost before I had had time to get my bearings outside the little church door.

And I guess we might say that way of taking me, together with the oddness of the car itself, was the first thing that set me back in my Joy. I don't know what I had expected exactly, but I hadn't expected this. I guess more or less all through my life I had sort of half way imagined I'd make the team when the time came, and I guess, when I did, I expected to go up in glory, special uniform and everything. Or at the very least I had expected to be allowed to float up there at an easy pace on my own, lounge up through snowy clouds and goldy sunshine and report to the Head Man when I got ready, almost on my own terms of



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familiarity and high good fellowship. After all, one of the chosen, you know. Fair fields of heaven, you know. Milk and honey—streets of gold . . .

When I was first in there with the ant feelers, cockroach legs, mouse hairs and all the other light things they'd sucked in along with me, like seed floats, of course I wanted to know what kind of a rig I was in. So I started feeling for walls. And funny part of it was, I couldn't feel any walls. Was I a nothing in Nothing now!? But no. While I was still reaching around in the dark and trying to get my bearings, a hard voice, metallic and terrible, like a hammer on a tin barn, almost, rapped open the stillness. It was one of the drivers. "Got to push this rig, Mac. We've got a union card that says we can do it. So I'll sleep out the first leg, and you don't spare the *whoosh.* Then you wake me and I'll take 'er the second part, and if we don't get him up to Pete's on time, I'll kiss your left hip pocket from here to the next red star."

So we started. Or I guess we did. Truth is, I couldn't feel a thing. I couldn't tell we were moving. But before I had time to worry much about it, evidently we had driven through both legs, they had really pushed 'er, hadn't spared the *whoosh,* and without doubt we were up to Pete's on time. "And so you can just keep your hip pockets out of my face," I heard the terrible voice say, and a laugh shook what I know now to have been the outer Edges of Heaven. "The Sky Haul never misses," I heard the other one say, and I could tell they were proud. "He'll make it in time to join his outfit. And that's what counts when there's a war on."

A war on?! Good Jesus God in Heaven!

Well, I got out of this car in which the drivers, apparently, had raced the stars and had won. The way I got out was a little odd, I thought. They reversed things now and built up pressure inside, and when a little tube finally opened up, naturally I and the ant feelers and the cockroach legs and the other light litter popped out. We were directed down toward a huge basket, and I won't say it was gold. Far as I could see it was just a kind of beat-up gray wicker basket with indefinite walls, and I was the only essence there, I think, in that one basket. What happened to the ant feelers, the cockroach legs and the other light litter, I really wouldn't know. What happened to me—well!! it wasn't what you'd expect, not on the Far Fields.

My basket was loaded on a big thing that you had to think was a gray car of a train. A lot of other baskets were loaded on, and there were a lot of gray cars to the train. Then we went for what seemed to me a very short haul, although it might have been a quite long haul. I'd sort of lost my perspective on time and distance, and I don't imagine there's any use not to admit that. When the train stopped, all of us stayed in our baskets, because we didn't know what else to do. For my part I began to be more apprehensive than I'd been for a long long time, but when a firm voice bounced at us out of a big gray speaker cone of a public address system I think it stiffened us all and put a kind of do-or-try starch in our forms. "All

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right, you guys, out of your baskets! If you guys think you came up here to loaf, we'll soon change that idea." (Didn't come up here to loaf? Peace and rest! What gives?) But we scrambled out of our baskets. And there was starch in our forms when we got out! At least we could see each other, and strangely we were the sizes and shapes we had been down below when we had our all-too-corporeal bodies with us. And some of us were in pretty bad shape, there's no slipping around that fact.

"Get in formation. Let's go!" The speaker-cone voice clearly was in no mood for nonsense. So we formed into a kind of ragged, barely-passable formation. Enough of us had been through it down below that it was possible now for us veterans to help jog and jostle the greenhorns into place. We straightened the lines as best we could, and we stood there wan and wondering, some of us starting to exchange a few corny, almost off-color jokes, just like old service times, and a light mist began to fall.

From the little shack just under the speaker cone he came, and he strode out across the platform that was in full view of us all. He did not glow; he did not have a halo, nor any wreath of stars about him any place that I saw. He was just a stocky shape of a man in a vague suit of khaki-brown that looked like a uniform, and the heavy thick-soled boots he wore looked to me like paratrooper jump-boots. He had two vague shapes with him, flunkies, both obviously of far lesser rank, one to carry a clip board and one to stand ready to do any needed thing. Their main function, as I saw later, seemed to be to leer at us and to look in full agreement about all that the Captain said.

"Is he God?" I heard someone ask in a very breathed-out bothered way, but I didn't hear any answer.

Then he started to speak. "Welcome to the Edge of Heaven, you guys. Welcome— And that's probably the last nice thing I'll say to any of you, until you prove to me you've got something on the ball. You guys think you've got a pretty good deal, coming up here. You really think you've got it made. Well, let me tell you this. Before I'm through with you, I'll make you wish you'd never been born—unless you measure up. I'll make you sorry you ever heard of Heaven—if you goof. Ah yes, if you measure up, this can be a pretty nice service. But this is the Edge of Heaven—not Heaven. Need I tell you, there's a war on. And you men have been chosen to come up here and help fight it, not so much because you deserved Heaven—few do these days (or ever have)—but because you've proved to us you can fight on the right side. Not a one of you but what has done many bad, even despicable, things. But you, all of you without one exception, clung to the idea of finally being better. Somehow in your deepest longings you thought you would one day eventually hold that line! shape up, start the hard road back to innocence and earn Heaven. But that's just where you were both very right and very wrong. Sure, you should have been better and earned Heaven; the way you were, you should have gone to Hell! Except you had that one little trait that saved, that's

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just where you would have gone—Hell. And listen, because this is important. In all of you we choose for that final enlistment in Heaven, when the time came and you had to make your choice in the really big encounters down below, you chose right, you chose the up instead of the down way. And that's all that made you eligible, finally, in our way of deciding. Although I'll have to admit, because of our system, they've got some able and quite strong men down in Hell that we have been forced to reject."

He talked on, a lot more of the same, and I won't say I was too happy about the way things were shaping up. It would be a lie if I did say that. Here I'd come all the way up the sky, thinking to rest and enjoy my rewards, and what happens? A tough-guy Captain in big boots strides out to speak mainly of a war being on and a hard fight coming up. Near the end of his oration I guess he must have noticed that I looked pretty wild. Because I guess my face has always looked wilder and more sledge-hammered than almost anyone's face when I've been hit between the eyes with a lost hope or had to give back a prize that I thought I had just fairly won.

When he was dismissing the others into the hands of the two vague flunkies for assignment to quarters and for all the other tedious dull details that have to be accomplished for new units of warriors, he motioned for me to come up on the platform. "You got a beef?" he said.

Let it be known about me, when the time comes I spout it. "Yes I do," I blurted. "Naturally I wasn't sure I'd be chosen for this sky life. But when I was, you can bet your boots I didn't expect to be put in some kind of an army for more fighting. I expected to come up here and lounge around, rest and see God. You're not God."

He laughed a little, that tight dangerous mirthless laugh that the Captains laugh when an underling has just spoken about what the Captain is not. "No," he said, and his voice I thought did seem a trifle sharp, "surely even you would not expect to see God at the Edge of Heaven." He paused and let his gaze drop to a far part of the platform where the mist swirled and eddied, and then he looked up toward where droplets milled about the speaker cone and could be imagined as making strange designs. "I've never seen Him myself," he said, his gaze jumping back to me, "but I have my orders. As indeed we all have. From here to the End-of-Time! if it takes that long to win it. Orders from Him. Through the long chain of command. —I hope to—some time—see Him. Perhaps at the end of the long fight, after we've won it. —Now will you stay? Or do you suspect they might have softer Captains, easier duties—down yonder?"

But he had touched the good part of my pride, and I suppose he had hoped to do that. "It's not a matter of the softer Captains," I retorted, "nor the easier duties. I can take what they dish out. My being here proves that! And actually, I don't think you can send me back now, even if you want to. If I don't choose to go. And I don't!" And we both knew I had stated it straight and true to the Captain. Also we both knew, facing each other there

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in the blunt encounter, amid the strange designs of the whirling mist, that it was the best of good starts for the long fight in from the Edge of Heaven.

—DAVID R. BUNCH

(Continued from page 75)

staring him down. "If we can't sense it, it doesn't exist. Period."

Yaddeth Omo's gaze wavered, and he shifted from one foot to the other. "This is perhaps interesting, but—"

"So if you say you're from a different time stream, I say that isn't true. I've never seen your world, never tasted it, never heard it, touched or even smelled it. Is it possible for me to do any of that?"

"Of course not!"

"Then your so-called time stream can't exist. And since it doesn't, you can't have come from there. Q.E.D."

"But I *did!*" Yaddeth Omo was obviously upset now. "You mustn't question what I—"

"Oh, maybe *you* think you did," Broderick said. "After all, *you* can touch your world. You can hear it, and see it. All you have to do is go back to it. But it's not real for me, or for any of us here. And that's why you can't exist in this world."

"But you *see* me!"

Broderick smiled. "I told you, I'm dreaming you. I dreamed you up for someone to argue with, just for fun. But I'm finished now, and all I have to do is wake up and you'll be gone. I just snap my fingers and I wake up every time."

Yaddeth Omo said, "I won't be gone. Don't try to make me think that. I won't be gone."

"Yes you will. After all, I'm the only one in this world who's seen you, so if I wake up . . ." Broderick looked expectantly at the man. "Well, Mr. Ego 27? How sure of yourself are you? Would you like me to show you?"

Yaddeth Omo licked his lips.

"It's a simple test—I snap my fingers, I wake up, and you're gone. Very pragmatic test. Shall I?"

"No!" said Yaddeth Omo, backing away.

"I think I will," said Broderick. "If you're afraid, you'd better leave now, before you get stuck in a world where you don't exist. Go back to your own world, if it exists for you, and stay there." He held up his hand, finger against thumb.

"*Stop!*"

Broderick snapped his fingers.

Yaddeth Omo disappeared, and a split second later Broderick's ears popped.

He smiled, and went into the kitchen to fix himself another cheese sandwich. As he got out the bread he wondered what the future of this time stream might have been if he'd been more of a fan of Sacher-Masoch. But that, of course, was idle speculation.

—TERRY CARR

COMING IN JUNE FANTASTIC

(On Sale April 27th)

The **ALL NEW FANTASTIC** featuring the conclusion of GORDON EKLUND'S Major New Novel, **BEYOND THE RESURRECTION.**

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F. M. Busby's first story was published in Future Science Fiction *in 1957. His second appeared in* AMAZING STORIES *last month. In the following vignette he sketches a sharp picture of a truly alien society of life-forms, as he describes—*

THE PUISS OF KRRLIK

F. M. BUSBY

KRRLIK THE SQUILTH surveyed and considered himself. Krrlik's self-designation, even when neuter, was always "he"; he felt it gave him an advantage in sexual combat with other Squilth. Such might occur today at Dssief's home arena; Vrilgn appeared to be approaching sexuality. Krrlik himself certainly was, though he used the normal ruses to hide his condition. The advantage of surprise . . .

It would be good to force Vrilgn into the egg-nurturing role again; it would be Krrlik's third victory over Vrilgn, and would probably lock Vrilgn permanently into egg-bearing with respect to Krrlik. Krrlik would gain much *puiss,* as well as avoiding the discomfort of egg-bearing and the pain of undischarged sperm. Krrlik remembered well the multiple agonies of sexual defeat.

He could find no fault with his bodily condition. The saclike torso suspended from the legs-juncture was richly spotted with excretory pustules oozing fragrant yellow-green wastes that flowed slowly downward, soothing him with their warmth and texture. He stroked himself with a mandible, savoring the taste and approving of the delicate balance between stickiness and slime. The oozing material clotted and hung in ropy strings from the coarse white bristles that grew in scattered clumps.

The immature pustules growing at the bases of many bristles itched deliciously. Self-indulgent, Krrlik seldom was able to let these ripen and mature naturally; all too often he would give way to the urge for pleasure and pluck the bristle, releasing excretion prematurely. The glow of sensation, as tension broke and matter flowed, was too much for Krrlik to resist.

He considered the hard darker-bristled tubes of his exoskeletal legs. Not many Squilth had ten legs functional at the some time. He had another half-grown; only one was at the bud stage. Here was more *puiss.* The more functioning legs, the better able to avoid losing any of them in group discussion.

In the matter of eyes, where the sockets formed a ring above the leg-bases, Krrlik felt he might be pushing success too far. Seven of the twelve were functional. Two were noticeably decaying; he noticed and enjoyed the odd color-values of that stage. Only

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three were budding; one of those could already tell light from dark. But two buds were on the same side, even adjacent. Krrlik considered crushing out two of the seven functional eyes, properly spaced around the ring, to insure new eyes growing as older ones decayed. It would not do to allow a period of minimal sight. Akpt had done that, had been reduced to three. Then Akpt had lost all three in discussion, and been eaten.

To eat was pleasant; Krrlik recalled the eating of Akpt. To be eaten was inevitable but Krrlik preferred to postpone it as long as possible.

Krrlik extruded his tongue from the opening at his apex. Yes, he was well advanced into sexuality. More so than Vrilgn, he was sure. That would be another advantage. Krrlik contracted his tongue laterally and thrust it, imagining Vrilgn's dismay at being penetrated and overcome, seeded and bereft of what little *puiss* it had built since last bearing eggs.

Satisfied, Krrlik rolled carefully one last time in the ripened pool of excreta, where it was deepest at the center of his home arena. Now with the warm sticky fluids coating his torso and enriching his scent-sense, he set forth to Dssief's home arena. It was good to arrive before others; he who was in place had an indefinable *puiss* over the Squilth who was required to enter and find a place of lesser scope. It was by noting such trivial advantages that Krrlik had progressed to his present state.

The Earthman would be present today, Krrlik remembered. He wondered what it might recognize of his *puiss,* of his triumph over Vrilgn. The Earthman had not yet seen Squilth in sexual combat.

The Earthman was not to be understood. The first time it had appeared at a home arena, it had done proper homage by excreting from the opening at the front of its apex. But this act had not been repeated. Later, always, the Earthman had come sheathed in a covering that prevented the social exchange of smells and excreta, as well as true discussion. Krrlik had guessed that, having only two eyes, it feared losing them and being eaten. Its fear was not in reason; Krrlik and others had, on that first occasion, torn small bits from it and found them inedible. Further, its legs could not be detached during even the most profound discussion. But still, after that first time, the creature had worn its coverings.

Krrlik could find no sign of *puiss* in the Earthman, though a being twice the height of a Squilth could hardly be without some semblance of it. Krrlik fought his unease.

He thought of Vrilgn's story, that the Earthman had tried to rub away Vrilgn's healthy coating of excrement and seal the red oozing openings that exuded the warm flow. Krrlik did not believe the Earthman could have tried to do such a thing. The creature was strange, yes, but surely not blind to the needs and goodnesses of life.

Krrlik went his way to Dssief's home arena, along the excrement-coated path, carefully tasting the still-moist spots with his sensitive foot-pads. The pleasurable itch of a growing pustule just below one of his two decaying eyes overcame his resistance; without con-

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scious intent, Krrlik plucked the bristle and released first a spurt and then a flow of warm rich fluid.

The decaying eye noted a small squirming lump in the flow. Krrlik was surprised: after all this time he was still releasing young from the occasion when Nfaeg had defeated him, forced him into egg-bearing. He caught and tasted the young with a mandible, then reached it to his apex and ingested it. Young were nutritious, tasty also, until their legs grew out.

As Krrlik approached Dssief's home arena, he felt the *puiss* that surrounded it. It was old; the central pool had ripened and enriched itself over many generations. Krrlik contemplated his own *puiss* before entering, building and enhancing it to meet Dssief without disadvantage.

Inside. The Earthman was present. Advantage? Doubtful. The Earthman showed no signs of understanding advantage, or any way of performing it. It was at the edge against a wall where the pool was shallow, its pitifully-few limbs folded awkwardly. Krrlik could find no sign of *puiss,* but kept watch for a time until his unease subsided.

Krrlik waited. Dssief opened idle discussion, not seriously. Krrlik disdained the bait of legs or eyes offered so casually but he did not offer in kind, for Dssief had not survived so long uneaten without much *puiss.*

Many young bobbed in the pool among the other food-organisms; Krrlik tasted and ingested several. It would not do to be uncivil, to disdain the young of Dssief's visitors, even though some were growing legs and losing in delicacy.

Others entered, and finally Vrilgn. Krrlik had nearly forgotten; quickly he rubbed surfaces with Dssief, to diffuse the scent of his growing sexuality and confuse Vrilgn as to its source. He had used that method before, but not against Vrilgn. It should still be effective.

The discussion proceeded. Krrlik paid little heed to it, except defensively. One with such *puiss* as his would be instantly overwhelmed by all if taken at disadvantage. He angled always toward Vrilgn, who seemed to be trying to avoid him. Finally Krrlik shifted to put Vrilgn directly in his path, and closed. He caught Vrilgn torso to torso, to mandible, tongue to tongue, *puiss* to *puiss.* Krrlik's sperm made ready to relieve his pain.

His mandibles pulled Vrilgn's apex to his; he ignored the leg that Vrilgn was tearing away from him, but worried two of Vrilgn's, and an eye besides. Krrlik hardened and extended his tongue, forced it into Vrilgn's apex, twisted and bent Vrilgn's tongue until it softened, then tip-to-tip forced concavity on it and began the penetration that would make Vrilgn a bearer of eggs.

Oh, there would be much *puiss* of this!

Little by little Krrlik forced his way. His sperm tortured him with writhing pressure; frantically he strove for release. Almost, now . . . The Earthman was making loud noises; Krrlik ignored the distraction.

A violent blow tore Krrlik away from his triumph, sent him sprawling, legs a-scrabble into the deepest part of the pool.

What had happened? The Earth-

(Continued on page 87)

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THE PILL

Medical science, it seems, always filters down to the public in the form of yet another pill. This one could work wonders—if you were willing to pay the price . . .

MAGGIE NADLER

THE WOMAN who sat alone on the veranda staring out at the mountains was a beauty. Early morning sunlight glinted on the golden hair that fell loose past her shoulders, and played over the cameo face with its dark eyes and perfect features. Her deep tan was set off against a white summer dress which also brought out the youthful suppleness of her figure. She sat motionless for a long time, gazing far off.

A door opened and a second woman appeared on the porch, a tumbler in her hand. The newcomer was perhaps fifty-five, and dumpy, with lank gray hair and a puffy face that even in her prime could scarcely have been attractive. She approached the seated woman and touched her gently on the shoulder. "It's time for your pill, dear," she said. The other made no response. "Your medicine," she said, more loudly, and when there was still no reply she moved around to face the front of the chair. This time the seated woman raised blank, remote eyes to her. "That's right, darling. Let me help you. Now open your mouth—that's a good girl"—and as the mouth popped obediently open she poured the contents of the glass down the blonde woman's throat. There was a gasping, choking sound as perhaps half the liquid came back up, dribbling out around the even teeth. The dumpy woman forced her own mouth into a smile. "That's just fine. Now I'll go back inside and do a few little things and then we'll go for a nice ride. How will that be?" *I can't take any more,* she screamed inwardly, *I just can't take it. It's a good thing it's all arranged and she's going away today, because I just can't take any more.*

But the blonde hadn't heard her and was already back in her old position, staring unseeingly straight ahead into the distance.

A short time later the dumpy woman emerged from the house once more. In each hand she carried a small suitcase. These she loaded into the trunk of a battered green sedan. Then she returned to the porch for her companion. She helped her to her feet and, moving slowly, guided her carefully down the steps along the walkway and assisted her into the car. She herself took the driver's seat, and only minutes later they were on the main highway. It was a long, silent, tedious drive across barren desert land, the woman at the wheel tense and preoccupied, the other lolling vacantly beside her. At

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last, after several interminable hours, the rocky landscape gave way to renewed greenery and presently they were driving up a winding tree-lined road which ended abruptly at a pair of great iron gates bearing the legend: GREEN MANSIONS. The gates were open and they drove on through until they came to a sprawling and ancient but apparently well cared-for mansion with a small parking area nearby. They eased into a space near the entrance. The dumpy woman unloaded the suitcases and assisted her companion out of the car and up the two low steps to the slightly open door. Timidly she pushed it farther open and they stepped together, the blonde leaning on her for support, into a large immaculate reception room. The receptionist, a handsome, somewhat hard-faced woman in a smartly-tailored suit, looked up and stared. For a moment she seemed startled. Then, "Yes?" she asked sharply.

"I—I'm Margaret Duggins and this is Mrs. Nelson, the patient I called you about last Wednesday. I believe you were expecting us . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"Oh, yes . . . Duggins . . . that's right. You're expected," the receptionist said in a milder tone. "Dottie!" she called toward the open door beyond her desk. A thin, dark-haired girl of about twenty, clad in a nurse's uniform, immediately appeared. She glanced in some surprise at the newcomers.

"Yes, Miss Biggs?"

"We have a new guest. Mrs. Nelson, here." She indicated the blonde who stood gaping at her new surroundings, saliva trickling from one corner of her mouth. "A room should be ready for her—you know, No. 19. Perhaps you'd better take her there now and get her settled."

"Yes, Miss Biggs." The girl took the blonde's arm in a brisk, businesslike manner and led her away. The woman named Margaret made as if to follow, but the receptionist called her back.

"No, Miss Duggins. Not today. We find that it's better if the relatives and friends stay behind at first. It's less confusing to the patient, less upsetting. Later, when she's all settled and comfortable, you can visit her as often as you like. No, don't worry about her bags—Dottie will get them later." The dumpy woman dropped back but continued to peer after the two retreating figures. The corridor was dim; through the gloom, she could make out vague shapes propped up in chairs staring at what must have been a television screen down at the far end . . . She forced her attention back to the receptionist, who spoke once more. "And now, if you'll just fill out these papers, there's information we need to have . . ."

About forty-five minutes later, the nurse, Dottie, re-entered the office. "Well, I finally got her to sleep. Gave her two sleeping tablets. It wasn't easy, though, Would you believe it, she started fighting me."

"God, what a pathetic case," muttered Miss Biggs.

"You mean because she dribbles? They all do that." said Dottie indifferently. "She's past ninety; what do you expect?"

"No, not her. I mean the daughter. Did you notice her?"

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A glimmer of understanding came into the nurse's eyes. "Did I! How could I avoid it? I wonder why people want to let themselves go like that, anyway. It's awful."

"Why anyone would let themselves become such an eyesore when the Youth Pill is so cheap is more than I'll ever see." The receptionist was fifty years and had a date with a college junior for that evening.

"I've got an aunt like that," said the nurse reflectively. "Won't take the Pill, lets herself go, you should just see her. She's eighty. Says if it can't make the rest of her young along with her skin she wants no part of it. She's one of those real old-fashioned New England rugged individualist types, so maybe you can excuse her. But I can't understand for the life of me why any Californian would want to act like that. I'm sure going to be taking the Pill by the time *I'm* 25 or 30."

The older woman sighed philosophically. "Well, you never can tell," she said, shaking her head. "It takes all kinds."

—MAGGIE NADLER

(Continued from page 84)

man! Interfering. How could this be? How could the creature interfere in what did not concern it? But no matter, for now Vrilgn was in *puiss,* holding Krrlik down. The tongue penetrating his, releasing Vrilgn's sperm into Krrlik, making him the egg-bearer. And oh, the pain! Like being eaten.

Now the others came. Legs torn away while he was in sperm shock. Because he had had so much *puiss,* they would take it all. Now, while they could.

The eyes. They left him none. No eyes, no legs. And now, no mandibles. They would leave him alive until the eggs bore, before eating him. Because his young, those that survived, would carry his *puiss,* needed by the race.

But for Krrlik now, no *puiss* at all. All, all gone, all taken. Vrilgn would take his home arena, his rich pool, sully it with his own lesser *puiss.*

For Krrlik, only the slow warm comfort of the pustules oozing rich fluids over his sperm-shocked torso, while he waited to bear young and then be eaten.

—F. M. BUSBY

COMING IN MAY AMAZING STORIES

(On Sale March 14th)

BOB SHAW'S, **OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES**—a NEW SLOW GLASS NOVEL (the sequel to **LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS).** JAMES TIPTREE, JR.'S, **THE MAN WHO WALKED HOME,** GORDON EKLUND'S, **SOFT CHANGE,** ROGER EBERT'S, **IN DYING VENICE,** GRANT CARRINGTON'S, **THERE'S NO ONE LEFT TO PAINT THE SKY,** JACK C. HALDEMAN II, **WATCHDØG,** MAGGIE NADLER'S, LATEST FEATURE, plus a new feature by GREG BENFORD.

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Here in an economical one thousand words, a new writer debuts with a modern recasting of the myth of Apollo and Daphne . . .

NICE TREES DON'T

B. MEBANE

COOL AIR BREATHED off the dark water over the two bodies lying on the blanket. Daphne took a last drag of harsh smoke and handed the joint to Del. While he was finishing it, she sat up and combed her straight hair, damp from their last swim at twilight. Her drifting mind dispersed into the peace of the trees and the night.

A tiny splash, audible in the stillness, recalled her from her dream. She watched as Del idly tossed another pebble into the lake. He looked up to meet her gaze and pinched out the smoldering roach, stashing it among his clothes.

"You grooving, baby?" he asked.

"Like wow," she said softly and bent over him with a placid face. She kissed him once lightly, then sprawled down for a longer one with her fingers twisted in his hair. He stroked her back and untied her bikini top. She rolled over and lay quiet for a time under his touch. Her body responded to his urgency, but her thoughts drew apart, seeking again to merge into the calm of the night. As his hands moved lower, she pushed them away.

"Cool it, Del."

Instantly he moved away and sat up to stare at the starlit water.

"Why do you always blow it, Daffy?" he said, not pausing for an answer. "It was perfect. The swim, and the smoke, and us together here. I really need you, Daffy."

"Please don't bug me about it," she said, feeling a wave of tenderness for him that almost swept her away, but she was held back by an unreadiness, a fastidious distaste.

He turned toward her again. "You've been holding out on me all summer, 'waiting for the right time,' you said. What time could be better than tonight?"

" 'Had we but world enough, and time,' " she murmured, lifting a hand to touch his beard lightly.

"Huh?"

"It's poetry," she said.

"Oh, balls. I would get mixed up with a spaced-out English major." Laughing, he reached for her again, and she struggled. He caught her wrists and pinned her with his body.

"You'll get it whether you want it or not," he said. She glared at him and saw his eyes glisten in the faint sky-glow.

"Oh, Daffy, please." His voice broke in a half-sob.

Her eyes closed and her body re-

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laxed. "Oh, all right," she said. "You don't have to get rough."

He kissed her for a long moment, then helped her take off the rest of the bikini. He stood to pull down his trunks. When they were around his knees, she sprang up and loped off giggling into the trees.

"I changed my mind again," she called back.

Cursing, he struggled out of the trunks and started after her.

Daphne smiled as she ran, even though twigs scratched her legs. He had looked so funny standing there helpless. She was still high enough to find the damp air soothing and the stars near and friendly.

After a few minutes she heard Del getting closer, and her mood shifted. He'd have a rotten temper if he caught her now, and she knew it was her fault. She changed direction and tried to move more quietly.

She came to a tight thicket of bay trees, whose dark leaves shut out the starlight. Turning around, she backed slowly deeper into the darkness. "Oh, trees, hide me," she whispered, knowing suddenly that she had come to the secret heart of the peace she longed for. She wanted desperately then to join the trees in their eternal calmness.

She became aware, but not through any normal sense, that something moved in the night, some *thing* ancient and dispassionate, that knew her desire and would fulfill it with an old magic.

A sudden wind shook the grove and set the leaves rustling. An electric thrill shot through her body, and she stretched and twisted in a new ecstasy. Her feet sank deep into the soft earth, and her toes lengthened, split, and rooted deeper. Her trunk elongated, and smooth bark covered her flanks and breast. Her arms and hair lifted, branched, and leafed out, whispering in the breeze. Peace enfolded her. *What a trip,* she thought, then realized with dawning wonder that it was real.

Dimly she was aware of Del, but not with eye or ear. He cast about among the trees, calling her name, and soon he receded. More vividly she sensed the stars above her, the wind in her branches, and the still earth beneath. She felt the other trees around her, and now that she was attending, she could understand the tongueless voices in their trembling leaves.

Welcome, our sister, they were saying, and *be safe with us,* and always *root and feed, branch and leaf, bud and seed* in an unconscious undertone that was compulsive.

Her mind dazzled, she found her leafy voice and asked *what happened?* and *how?* and *why?*

The god of the grove, they said, *(root and feed) took pity on you (branch and leaf), and answered your prayer (bud and seed), now you are our sister forever (root and feed).*

Daphne tried to shiver, but no gust of wind came at that moment. Part of her embraced the long dreaming serenity she sensed in the trees, but a will to action surged up in her. *What do they do for kicks?* she wondered, and was answered.

Drink the showers of spring (bud and seed), bask in the sun of summer (branch and leaf), a hundred years between earth and sky (root and feed).

A green thought in a green shade

(Continued on page 98)

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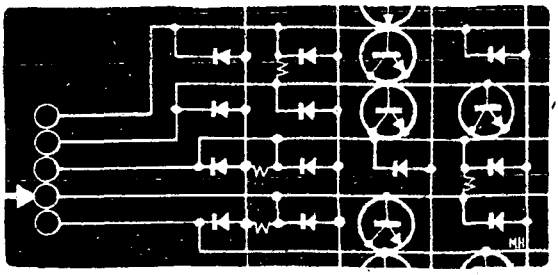
ALEXEI & CORY PANSHIN

SF in Dimension



THE RESURRECTION OF SF—I

THE CHIEF DISSIMILARITY between any two mimetic writers—Salinger and Updike, shall we say, or Roth and Cheever—is not in subject but in style. The subject, taken in large, is the same in all cases: society. And society is there before our eyes for them and for all of us to see. Did Salinger get it right? Ask any prep school student of 1948. Did Roth get it right? Knock on any New York psychiatrist's door and ask the Jewish mother's son on the couch. The difference between these writers is not in what they see, but in how they see and how they say what they see.

On the other hand, the chief dissimilarity between any two writers of speculative fantasy is not in expression but in vision, not how a thing is said, but what is seen. It isn't desirable for a writer of sf to be constantly stubbing his thumb on his typewriter, any more than it is desirable for a mimetic writer to wamble gracefully for a thousand pages about nothing in particular. Nonetheless, it is possible for a near illiterate to captivate large audiences long after his deficiencies have been dragged to light, provided what he says means something important to his readers and is urgently communicated. Nothing else could explain the success of sf writers like Austin Hall or A.E. van Vogt, men who could never have had the same success as mimetic writers.

The method of the speculative fantasy writer is to take the deep stuff of the mind that society denies or holds rigidly confined—the longing for love, freedom and power, the fear of rejection, frustration and defeat—and imagine it into being:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

The World Beyond the Hill is the sum of the symbols—the places, powers and populations—in which this stuff is embodied. The symbols are empty vessels into which meanings can be poured, blank screens on which meanings can be projected. To be effective, these symbols must be not true, but plausible. They must be able to bear the weight of belief in spite of the particular objections of science and the rational objections of philosophy.

It is no accident that every society should have art. Art gives human beings the opportunity to learn, in advance of the necessity for action, what it is they feel and what they think about what they feel. Just as philosophy, or history, or criticism give explicit form to our cooler

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thoughts—our ideas—so art gives form to hopes and fears, both as they might appear in society, and as they appear, pure, hot and strong, in the mind, and then allows them to contend.

Real, true existing symbols cannot bear the pure, hot strength of uncompromised emotion. To put it another way, hopes and fears are ideal types, the essences of what is to be seen impurely everywhere in the world, but purely nowhere. They cannot be fairly and completely represented by anything which exists. How can the Chinese Communists represent monsters for us—the archetypes of all that we feel is hateful in the world—when we know them as all-too-human ping pong players? How can the Beatles represent the archetypes of all that we feel is most worthy when John Lennon has been frank to tell us of the internal contradictions—which we realistically might have expected—that disqualify the Beatles from sainthood?

Realistic symbols—pseudo-Chinese or pseudo-Beatles set to play out their meanings amidst the mimetic representations of all that is familiar—cannot serve the purpose either. All that exists in the Village world of the known means too many things to too many people to successfully mean only one thing.

The novelist Elizabeth Janeway has spoken of the difficulties of writing mimetic fiction with only a single meaning, using the example of the story of an unwed mother: "An author can still set up a situation that involves the girl, her lover, the man she might have married and didn't, the child, the parents, the whole village, but his readers won't react in a predictable way. Some people will say, 'Right on,' and others will say, 'What about the population explosion?' Some people will say her parents are stinkers, and the tragedy lies in their anger with the girl. In short, there will be all kinds of reactions to the situation, and not just one you can count on.

"In other words, the symbols and the meanings which are the tools of fictional communication have ceased to carry a significance which will be commonly agreed upon. Fiction is becoming an archaic and special language. It is no longer a 'lingua franca' that everyone can understand. I don't, myself, think that fiction will die out; but it will have to change."

Miss Janeway speaks of "fiction," but she means "mimetic fiction," and its inadequacy to do more than fairly reflect the contradictions of society. Mimetic fiction must strike society's best compromise between conflicting reactions to unclear situations.

If Miss Janeway wants fiction to deal with clear situations that cannot be misinterpreted, then it is the need for speculative fantasy she is invoking. Real and realistic symbols are inadequate for the representation of pure emotions in clear situations. What is required is imaginative symbols that transcend the confusions of society. Unlike real or realistic symbols, the transcendently imaginative places, populations and powers of the World Beyond the Hill contain nothing that might contradict their intended meanings. But what is even more wonderful, they not only contain all that is consciously expressed of a meaning, but all that which is not expressed, but might be. That is, a true World Beyond the Hill symbol of monstrosity or sanctity will be endlessly more monstrous or saintly than we are explicitly told. The symbols of the World Beyond the Hill are deeper than a well.

But these transcendent imaginative symbols must still be plausible, even if they are not real or realistic. We must be able to feel that they *could* be true—to find relevance in them—even though we may know that they do not exist in our

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Village. They must stand outside the certainties of science and the razors of philosophy, beyond objection, and anything which makes them more plausible is relished. Greater plausibility increases the visibility of relevance.

We all know the traditional symbols of the World Beyond the Hill. The places of wonder: Arcadia, Araby, Cathay, Lyonesse, the Great Forest, East of the Sun and West of the Moon, Valhalla, the Isles of the Blessed, Atlantis. The powers: magic rings, enchanted swords, draughts of immortality, caps of invisibility, seven-league boots, ever-filled purses, wells of wisdom, runes, spells, curses, and prophecies. The populations: gods, ghosts, witches, wizards, ogres, jinns, brownies, elves, giants, cyclopses, minotaurs.

All these and how many more? A vast array of symbols, capable of representing any meaning, purely, singly and deeply. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century, these symbols had lost their plausibility. They no longer lay in the area outside science and philosophy where they might be believed in.

It was the problem of the nineteenth century to find new plausible alternative symbols, as varied and flexible as the old. This was no inconsiderable problem. How? Where to begin, to even look?

This problem was compounded by another, the narrow limits of the fiction that a serious, socially-minded age would accept. The novel was still a comparatively new and disreputable form. In a study of the popular arts in America, Russel Nye says, "As they had in England, novels faced hostility in America from the orthodox Protestant sects, since, as clerics and critics agreed, they might 'pollute the imagination,' give 'false ideas of life,' and 'contribute to female depravity.' On the other hand, there were those who claimed that novels could 'teach moral lessons. . . . , blend instruction with amusement . . . , regale the imagination, and reform the heart.' . . . The American public maintained this ambivalent attitude deep into the nineteenth century. As late as 1822 *The Christian Spectator* still argued that fiction, because of 'its moral blemishes and unreal pictures of human life,' ought to be read with caution." With these limitations, the invention of new places and populations must have been substantially impossible.

Powers were another matter. In *Frankenstein; or the New Prometheus* (1818), Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley discovered a new method for rendering the untamed powers of the World Beyond the Hill plausible even in the midst of the familiar world.

During the damp Swiss summer of 1816, the house party of which she was a member relieved the tedium of being forced indoors by reading ghost stories. From Mary Shelley's description, the stories seem made more of pathos than horror, treating of bereaved bridegrooms and noble families blighted by curses. All the familiar not-to-be-believed old stuff. Nonetheless, the company was sufficiently amused that Lord Byron suggested they should each write a ghost story. While all the others made their beginnings, Mary was entirely baffled:

"I busied myself *to think of a story*—a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name. I thought and pondered—vainly."

While pondering, she would listen to the conversations between Shelley and Byron. "During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed,

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and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. . . . Perhaps a corpse would be reanimated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and enbued with vital warmth."

That night, Mary Shelley's mind fixed on these notions in a way that it never had with any of her conceptions of ghosts. "I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine; show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. . . . On the morrow I announced that I had *thought of a story.*"

Mary Shelley had thought of a story. Mary Shelley had also revived the powers of the World Beyond the Hill with the same electric flash that brought Victor Frankenstein's monster to life. Not a spell in the hands of a necromancer, not that implausibility. But science-beyond-science! A lightning stroke!

It was science that had been the death touch of the old symbolism. In his apology when *Death of a Salesman* opened on Broadway in 1949, Arthur Miller said, "It has often been held . . . that modern man has had the blood drawn out of his organs of belief by the skepticism of science . . ." Science, then? Ah yes, exactly—science. It is science that marks precisely the border between the known and the unknown. Take one step beyond the known, or five steps. Bring to life every power the World Beyond the Hill has ever conceived. Salt them with a fact or two, add a dash of analogy, and call them science. What could be more plausible that that?

In 1791, after Luigi Galvani had spent twenty years in making frogs' legs twitch, he announced that he had discovered the *life force* of the alchemists. Mary Shelley didn't take this pronouncement seriously. The preface to the first edition of *Frankenstein*, written by Percy Bysshe Shelley in her name, states, "I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination. . . . It was recommended by the novelty of the situations which it develops. . . ."

"Science" made the operating power of *Frankenstein* plausible, and "science" has lent plausibility to the powers of the World Beyond the Hill ever since. Powers that are not true powers at-all, but instead the effects of our hopes and fears made manifest in order "to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart." Magic is no longer a plausible excuse for the appearance of these effects among us. So call the unknown and unknowable reasons for their coming galvanism, like Mary Shelley. Or call them mesmerism, morphine and clairvoyance, like Poe. Call them vibrations, or rays, or apergy, or magnicity. Call them hormones, viruses, psychic power, radiation, mutation, computer science, or genetic engineering. Call them whatever science is currently in the news. Liken the effect to a known effect. Quote wholesale from *Scientific American*—or from Herschel's *A Treatise on Astronomy*, like Poe. Anything for necessary plausibility.

But the result is never itself science. It must always be science-beyond-science. Poe may have cribbed the details of mesmerism that he used in his story, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), and the story may have been taken

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seriously by credulous seekers of strange truths, but here is its conclusion:

"As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of 'dead! dead!' absolutely *bursting* from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer [What other way? Sf writers do not have to be observant to survive.], his whole frame at once—within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk—crumbled—absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putridity."

That conclusion is no result of mesmerism ever seen on this earth. That conclusion is fear given form.

Through the early and middle nineteenth century, Mary Shelley was followed by a few others like Poe, Hawthorne, and Verne in justifying the powers of the World Beyond the Hill by allusion to science. Here is Hawthorne in his story, "Rappaccini's Daughter": "Just at that moment Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunder-stricken man of science,—'Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is *this* the upshot of your experiment?'"

But because these powers were in all cases intrusions upon the Village—forced to fight for room to exist—they were inclined to be minor, even trivial. It was all that the seriosity of the time could accept.

Until the 1890's, the populations and places of the World Beyond the Hill were still occasionally embodied in the old familiar symbols, as in George Meredith's new Arabian Nights adventure, *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856), or George MacDonald's allegorical novel *Phantastes* (1858). Some of Andersen's tales, or Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)—nominally for children, therefore allowed latitude—might temper the traditional symbols by including mechanical birds or logical conundrums, but they did nothing to effectively extend the narrow dimensions of the World Beyond the Hill.

No other writers renewed the populations and places of the World Beyond the Hill. It simply wasn't in the times to do.

The problem was not merely one of producing new creatures and new lands. Not if the creatures were no more than ordinary—if scientifically advanced—human beings in a new setting, like those Percy Greg's hero finds on Mars in *Across the Zodiac* (1880), or those that William Bradshaw's party finds at the center of the earth in *The Goddess of Atvatabar* (1892). The language of Atvatabar even proves to be English with the letters transposed. And not if the new countries, like Mars and Atvatabar, hold no mystery.

Neither poor M. Valdemar nor Frankenstein's monster are true members of the populace of the World Beyond the Hill. They are not deeper than a teacup, let alone a well. Rather, like an enchanted princess or the water-lugging broomsticks of the Sorceror's Apprentice, they are singed by the power of the World Beyond the Hill, and inhabited by the fire. The same might be said of automatons like those in Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful" (1844), or Fitz-James O'Brien's "The Wondersmith" (1859).

And neither are the mind-reading humans that Edward Bellamy's narrator discovers on an unknown island in "To Whom This May Come" (1888), or the prescient humans that another Bellamy narrator finds on Mars (reached in a swoon), in "The Blindman's World" (1886): "They were in no respect dissimilar, so far as I could see, to the men, women, and children of the Earth, save

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for something almost childlike in the untroubled serenity of their faces, unfurrowed as they were by any trace of care, of fear, or of anxiety." Freedom from neurosis is not sufficient to make a true inhabitant of the World Beyond the Hill.

Perhaps the nearest things to original creatures of the World Beyond the Hill prior to Wells appeared in two short stories by Fitz-James O'Brien. In "The Diamond Lens" (1858), the narrator, with the aid of a scientific-beyond-science microscope, espies a girl whom he names Animula inside a drop of water and becomes enamored: "It was a female human shape. When I say 'human,' I mean it possessed the outlines of humanity,—but there the analogy ends. Its adorable beauty lifted it illimitable heights beyond the loveliest daughter of Adam." Is this truly a superior creature or are we listening to the normal hyperbole of the lovestruck? There is no way to be sure. There is no contact, the drop of water evaporates and Animula dies while the narrator faints. In "What Was It? A Mystery" (1859), we are presented with what is probably a true inhabitant of the World Beyond the Hill—a menacing invisible monster. But the creature can only be tolerated in a fiction by remaining resolutely silent and invisible, even after capture, until at last it starves to death. That is about as effectively limited as an inhabitant of the World Beyond the Hill can be and still qualify for a membership card.

Until the 1890's, too, excursions into strange realms were never tours into the World Beyond the Hill. Daring didn't extend that far.

In "The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall" (1835), Poe might send a balloon to the Moon, rationalizing this bit of science-beyond-science with a learned footnote justifying belief in a lunar atmosphere linked to our own, and protecting himself by the assumption of a jocular tone. But we never learn whether the Moon is a place of mysteries. Poe drops the story before we find out. Similarly, Poe's novel, *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* (1837), ends with a canoe drifting into a sheet of fog near the South Pole. Judging by Poe's interests and the construction of the story, the intention would seem to be a trip into the interior of the earth. But again Poe backs off and ends his book abruptly before we can find out.

If this was a failure of nerve, it was a failure of nerve common to the century. Jules Verne, the acknowledged disciple of Poe, who in 1897 finished *A. Gordon Pym* as *The Sphinx of the Ice-Fields,* did no better in any of his novels. In his period of greatest originality, from 1863 to 1870, Verne sent various sets of characters off for *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863), on *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), on *A Trip from the Earth to the Moon* (1865, and sequel 1870), and around the world aboard a submarine *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869). These stories were a resurrection of the marvelous voyages of the eighteenth century, the modern heirs of *Gulliver's Travels,* all made plausible by science-beyond-science. However, quite remarkably, none of these voyages have destinations. The balloon drifts until it falls to earth. The voyagers to the center of the earth are returned to the surface by an erupting volcano. The travelers to the Moon circle the satellite without landing, very much like Apollo 8, and return for splashdown in the Pacific. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* is perhaps the most adventurous: "Where was I? I had to know. . . . Captain Nemo came over and took me by the arm. He then picked up a piece of chalky stone and went over to a rock of black basalt, where he wrote only a single word: AT-

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LANTIS." But after one brief hour of brooding over the drowned ruins with synopses of Plato dancing through their heads, Captain Nemo and the narrator wave goodby to the lost continent and return to the *Nautilus.*

Sam Moskowitz says of *From the Earth to the Moon:* "Verne would undoubtedly have liked to include an actual landing on the moon. But the method he selected for the firing of a projectile into space—a giant cannon—left no logical means of returning his characters to earth." In view of his habitual practice, we suspect that Verne would have actively disenjoyed the obligation of describing the consequences of a landing on the Moon—even had he been able to provide for a means of return—and after one quick hour of contemplation of the lunar wastes would have bundled his travelers back aboard ship and hurried them home. The journey is always the point to Verne, never the place journeyed near, or over, or by, or through. In his only other extra-terrestrial *voyage extraordinaire—Hector Servadac* (1878)—Verne has his travelers snatched off the earth by a passing comet, carried out into space to the vicinity of Saturn, and then returned home safe again.

At last, however, after Verne, we come to a departure in approach. It is a singularly important departure because it prepared for the possibility of introducing new creatures and new places that were truly of the World Beyond the Hill. The authors who succeeded Verne in the 1870's and '80's still restricted themselves to writing about powers, but they did so in a new way.

Through Verne, those who wrote about the World Beyond the Hill brought its powers into the Village. Not just into the Village, into normal society. After Verne, those who wrote about these powers felt free to pursue them into the future or out into space or down the rabbit hole into the center of the earth. These places were not transcendently different, but neither were they the heart of society.

There was a point to this change. As intrusions or innovations in our society, the powers were weak, quickly here and then gone, lacking consequence, and generally of no great importance. For the sake of plausibility, this was necessarily so. O'Brien's diamond lens was a window, not a gateway, for if it were a gate, then Animula might come through it, devastate the nation with her superior beauty, and be elected president—and that would be implausible.

However, in other times and other places, the newly discovered powers of science-beyond-science might be well-established or might be allowed to demonstrate their full strength with no loss in plausibility. And it might be very interesting—even the properly serious thing to do—to study the effects on societies not unlike our own of the powers of the World Beyond the Hill. The results could be satirical, or even utopian.

In effect,, the writers who succeeded Verne improved on Verne's readings of his masters, the eighteenth century imaginary voyagists and Poe. For this new method was the old method of Swift in Lilliput. The land of Lilliput is just like any place else and the people are no different than anybody. But by some happenstance, the power of the World Beyond the Hill has touched the people and made them small (imagine it happening to a single person in our society, like Frankenstein's monster brought to life). The result is amazingly satirical. And Poe, in one sketch published in the year of his death, "Mellonta Tauta" (1849), presented a satirical letter written to a friend by a nit-wit named Pundita high over the ocean "On Board Balloon 'Skylark,' April 1, 2848." *"Tempora mutantur*—excuse me for quoting the Etrus-

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can," writes she. But the title of the sketch, freely translated, seems to mean either "coming events" or, equally, "more of the same." Poe cannot prevent himself from beginning with a joke of disavowal—note the date of the letter—or concluding with another: "Good bye, until I see you again. Whether you ever get this letter or not is a point of little importance, as I write altogether for my own amusement. I shall cork the MS. up in a bottle however, and throw it into the sea." But the possibilities of Poe's method in the sketch are apparent.

In Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), the hero journeys underground and discovers more than the mere living fossils that Vern's adventurers found. He finds utopia, run on *vril* power.

In Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000-1887,* the hero, transferred to the future by mesmeric sleep, rather than dream, the usual method of previous voyages to the future such as Louis Sebastien Mercier's *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred* (1770), discovers familiar people (including the living image of his fiancee) in familiar places. But the society he finds is utopia, based on the unfathomable social power—but the power of the World Beyond the Hill nonetheless—of the Industrial Army, that is, the entire population united for the good cause of social advancement.

Like "Mellonta Tauta," George T. Chesney's short story, "The Battle of Dorking" (1871), presented the future in its own person without the need of an observer from our time to act as an interpreter. This was the first of a long series of future war stories (including sequels to Chesney's story written by other authors, such as "What Happened After the Battle of Dorking" and "Mrs. Brown on the Battle of Dorking") that occupied the attention of England until the English were distracted by the First World War.

Perhaps the strangest of all these strange power stories was Edwin Abbott's *Flatland* (1884). In this satire, human kind is reduced by the unknown, not just to the size of Liliputians, but to two dimensions, without otherwise being altered from its normal state of social confusion. The hero, A. Square, has his consciousness expanded by an encounter with a sphere.

None of these stories goes so far as to offer creatures who are not immediately intelligible or realms that offer the frightening or the exalting. Not quite so far as that. But by pursuing the powers of the World Beyond the Hill afield, they raise the possibility for their own successors.

From the 1840's until 1890, there were two quite distinct publishing traditions in America and England. Almost all of the American stories we have mentioned up until this point originated in the high tradition of respectable magazines and hardcover books. Poe appeared in *Godey's Lady's Book,* Hawthorne in *The Democratic Review,* O'Brien in *The Atlantic Monthly,* Bellamy in *Harper's.* But through this period there was the parallel low disreputable tradition of the dime novel. After the Civil War, beginning with *The Steam Man of the Prairies* in 1868, there were published hundreds of speculative fantasy dime novels, so-called "invention stories." According to Sam Moskowitz, more than seventy-five per cent of these were the work of one man, Luis Philip Senarens, writing chiefly under the nom de plume, Noname. Like the products of the reputable literary tradition, all of these were power stories, filled with steam-powered mechanical men, cars, tanks, submarines, and flying machines, or alternatively, electrical-powered mechanical men, etc.

After the Civil War, there was a general rise in respectable or semi-respectable

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romantic fiction—if you like, an approach of the two traditions. Examples of this popular fiction are Ouida's *Under Two Flags* (1867), Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* (1869), Wallace's *Ben Hur* (1880), and Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885). Verne's popularity is a measure of this same approach, and the plunge into strange places after Verne is a reflection of this new freedom to be exciting, rather than merely uplifting or cautionary.

Finally, in the 1890's, with changes in printing and distributing—as well as a confirmed change in the reading audience—it was possible for the first time to publish popular magazines for the entire family, magazines that struck a middle ground between the high and low tradition. This was the period when editors like George Lorimer and Edward Bok established their magazines, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Ladies' Home Journal,* as necessary fixtures in every middle-American home. In some real sense, it was magazines like these that presented that large enduring heart of America with its role and its ideals.

There were two general lines of magazines established. One was the ancestor of today's slick magazines, with roots more in the high tradition of the literary magazine than in the low tradition of the dime novel. The first of these magazines was the English magazine, *The Strand* (January 1891—), which soon had an American edition. The first such American magazine was *McClure's Magazine* (June 1893—), which in its early years was in part a reprint from one of the British imitators of *The Strand.* These magazines published both fiction and articles. The other line, with closer alliances to the dime novel tradition, was the all-story pulp magazine. The first of these was *Argosy,* which in 1896 dropped its general magazine format and quality paper in favor of a policy of nothing but fiction and pulp paper.

Both these new lines of magazines were receptive to speculative fantasy. They were receptive, too, to the possibility of truly alien aliens and strange realms. In the thirty years after 1890, the rest of the devices necessary for the resurrection of speculative fantasy as a whole literature—with populations, powers and places all together—in the hands of Gernsback and his successors were developed.

We will describe that development in our next column.

—Alexei & Cory Panshin

(Continued from page 89)

(branch and leaf), Daphne murmured, sinking deeper into vegetable lethargy like a heap of soft leaves. Then she realized that the chant of the trees was overpowering her thoughts. *I can't bear it (root and feed) (no!)* she screamed. She knew that, however much she might momentarily desire the peace of the grove, she belonged in the animal world of life and love with Del. *Let me go, oh please let me go,* she begged.

Whatever grove-gods there be answered that prayer too.

She telescoped down in sudden pain, shedding bark and dropping leaves. Standing in the darkness under the trees, she breathed in deep, sobbing sighs and ran her hands over her body in half-disbelieving joy.

She heard him still moving through the woods, shouting "Daffy, Daffy."

"Over here, Del," she called. Her voice was soft but loud enough.

—B. Mebane

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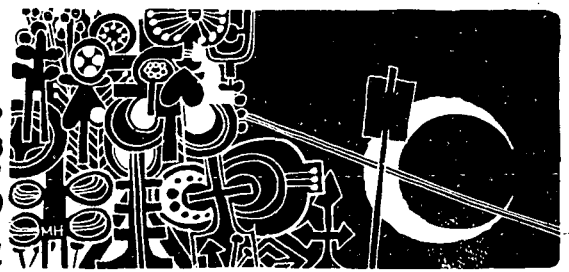

Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet of paper, and addressed to: According To You, *P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046*

Dear Ted:

I see in the new FANTASTIC that one of your readers (Don Long? I don't have the copy right here) [*Yes.—TW*] suggests my reading *Bored of the Rings* to learn about parody.

Well, I picked up a copy almost two years ago, took it home full of glee, and was thoroughly disappointed. Gave it up after getting about a quarter of the way through. The book (at least in its first quarter) is corny, supercilious, thoroughly sophomoric. I certainly don't put it down as the work of some college boys sitting around and having a party, but I thought it far short of professional quality.

I think its failure grows chiefly from the fact that the "humor" didn't grow from the original—it was just typical campus jokes grafted onto a weak retelling of *LotR*. The whole point of the Ova Hamlet stories (at least, as I try to make any point in them) is gained by exaggerating characteristics found *in the originals*—the morbid stasis of Ballard, the superhipness of Moorcock's Cornelius, the ignorant paranoia of Ellison, the bone-headed brutality of the Howard school, the freaked-out shudderiness of Lovecraft. . . .

Just paraphrasing the latest story of (name any author) and larding your version with generous excerpts from Joe Miller's Jokebook isn't good parody and isn't satire at all . . . sorry, Mr. Long.

[*from a personal note to the editor:*] . . . I suspect that Ova is getting her ovaries together anyhow, maybe to take a crack at Phil Dick in another month or so, soon as her next period arrives.

RICHARD LUPOFF
Berkeley, Ca., 94705

Frankly, I found Bored of the Rings *a complete bore, myself, and a great disappointment after the Harvard Lampoon Staff's job on James Bond a few years earlier. The difference, I suspect, lies in the fact that the Bond lampoon was also a rather good thriller—certainly better than Flemming's last several.—TW*

Dear Mr. White,

I went to Southend-on-Sea yesterday. It's about ten miles away, and the cheap day return fare is 21p. There's a very good book shop there, and it's the nearest place where I can get AMAZING and FANTASTIC. Basildon is a fairly large new town with a population of 75,000, but it has only one good book shop, and that's W. H. Smith, who rarely have science fiction magazines on their shelves. I was able to buy the October and December FANTASTICS in Watford where I was staying recently. Yesterday I bought the January AMAZING and the February

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FANTASTIC. I've read the first part of Keith Laumer's "The Shape Changer," and it was great, and I'll read the second part just as soon as I get the time. The shorter stories in that issue were not so good though.

I approve of the larger-size type. Nobody wants to read with a microscope. I'm sure small print helps to make you short-sighted. Like everybody else, I didn't like your magazines so much when they were all reprints, but one reprint per issue is permissible. I get the idea that your magazines are really one magazine published monthly, but with two different names. That's all right. You'd like to publish AMAZING monthly I expect, but don't want to stop bringing out FANTASTIC, in case a time when things are more prosperous arrives, and you can bring them both out monthly. AMAZING and FANTASTIC are the best fan-oriented SF magazines. Ten pages of letters! We can have fun with that. It makes you feel part of something. I think a lengthy review column of fanzines is unnecessary though. You could have more respectable names for your magazines, but I don't suppose you'll ever dare to change them. I like single-word names like *Analog, Galaxy, If,* and *Fantasy.* I've taken my idea for a name from Alexei Panshin's phrase 'creative fantasy'. I think *Creation* would be a lovely name. And if, after all these years, you risk changing the name of AMAZING, call it SPECULATION.

All the covers I've seen recently have been good. Don't worry about whether the stories you publish are new wave, old wave or medium wave, science fiction or fantasy. Just publish the best prose that the authors send you. By the way, how much do you pay your writers, word for word?

I think science fiction writers are being too conservative in their ideas these days. All *Analog's* stories seem to take place in a never-never future in which Earth has colonised the whole galaxy, and nothing out of the ordinary ever happens. I would like to see authors writing about things that they know for a fact are impossible. That would really be something. Of course, they're afraid to write science these days, because they know that any theory they propound will be blasted to bits by experts.

I'm sorry to note the reduction in the number of pages, but then if that puts the magazines on a sounder financial footing, then it has to be done.

In 1968 an American friend told me I should read *Stranger in a Strange Land.* I didn't realise at the time that the book was the centre of a cult. I find it rather amusing, because to me *Stranger* is just another science fiction novel. I hope Robert Heinlein has benefited from increased sales, though. Charles Manson also claimed inspiration for his insanity from the music of the Beatles.

The Tate murders brings me to the question of whether there is a connection between science fiction and violence. A recent survey of television programmes showed that programmes of historic drama had more violence than drama about the present, but that there was most violence in programmes about the future. Television is different from the written word, but fiction is fiction, so I think it applies to the written stuff as well. Why should science fiction be violent? My theory is that the readers have guilt complexes about reading escapist literature, so that, so they can pretend they are facing up to the world and its problems, they like the escapism to be as violent and sordid as possible. Authors need have no fear, however, that they will wreck society by including a few violent scenes in their stories, unpalatable though they may be to me. Violence may be stimulated in some people, but it will be subli-

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mated in others. You may change individuals this way, but you won't change society, for better or worse. I think we can safely ignore Dr. Wertham—whoever he is.

Just one small point about layout. I hate coming to the bottom of a page and finding the words CONTINUED ON PAGE 120, and then having to search through the end of the mag for the rest of the story I was enjoying. Please print all the pages of a story consecutively, and then if there's a big space left over, fill it up with an illustration or an ad.

We're in the unfortunate position in this country of being without a single science fiction magazine of our own at the moment. I hope the situation will soon be changed. Is SF becoming less popular, compared with other literature that is, or is the slump in magazine sales due to competition from the many paperbacks available? Perhaps you are also having to compete with psychedelic drugs.

MALCOLM E. WRIGHT
2 Marney Drive, Barstable
Basildon, Essex, ENGLAND

Either your letter took the long way around the world, or it became submerged in our files for a while; if the latter's the case, my apologies for the delay in its publication. Given a choice, it is wiser to publish two bimonthly magazines then one monthly—each issue remains on sale (and thus has more opportunity to sell) longer. But I do *try to differentiate between the two magazines, each of which to me has a distinct and separate personality. As for our titles, not only is tradition a factor* (AMAZING *has been around since 1926 without a title change—save the insertion of* Science Fiction *before the* STORIES, *which I instituted two years ago—and* FANTASTIC *since 1952), but so is reader and newsdealer acceptance. A new title would amount to starting a new magazine. That's very difficult, especially now. The last sf magazine to be launched successfully—that is still being published—is this one. As I've mentioned in these pages recently (but no doubt after you wrote your letter), we pay 1¢ to 3¢ a word, and more in a very few cases. As for the continuations, see my editorial in the August, 1971 issue. Some things we simply have to live with.* —TW

Dear Mr. White:

I particularly enjoyed L. Sprague deCamp's article on Lovecraft and Alexei Panshin's critical column in the August FANTASTIC. Your explanatory editorial was straightforward and interesting. I hope that the anxiety over sales you expressed in answer to Cy Chauvin's letter will change to contentment. If FANTASTIC were to fold now I'd go with it. [*Well, not contentment, perhaps, but the crisis seems to have passed.* —*TW*]

Several questions come to mind, particularly one or two of a bibliographic nature, for I am conducting research into various aspects of sf as the basis for a critical study. The questions are:

1. When did you take over FANTASTIC?
2. When did L. Sprague deCamp's feature, *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers* start and what did they cover previously?
3. Has AMAZING or FANTASTIC printed any other Panshin articles? If so, when and what about?
4. How long has Berry's fan column been running in AMAZING?
5. Is there some sort of index of contents (essays and stories) to AMAZING and FANTASTIC? I desperately need such information.

JEFFERY S. ANDERSON
1707 Sebring St. NW
Huntsville, Ala., 35805

Okay, one at a time:

1. My name first appeared on the masthead of the April, 1969 issue of FANTASTIC—*but in actuality that issue was edited*

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by the previous editor; Barry Malzberg and I only did follow-up chores, like proofing, on it. The first issue I actually edited was the June, 1969 issue.

2. In the June, 1971 issue, dealing with Robert E. Howard.

3. SF in Dimension *began in the June, 1970 issue, and has been in every issue since; Panshin has contributed book reviews to* AMAZING, *but no other articles or essays.*

4. Since the July, 1969 issue. The title, The Clubhouse, *was revived from a column by Rog Phillips which appeared in* AMAZING *during its pulp days in the late 1940's and early 1950's (and which appeared briefly, in the mid-50's, in* Universe).

5. Unfortunately, no. Is anyone out there interested in preparing one? —TW

Dear Ted,

I started buying AMAZING and FANTASTIC soon after you took over—which is, perhaps, the highest compliment any reader can offer. But that doesn't mean I have no complaints; a few follow, plus various thoughts that appeared on the paper almost by themselves.

There seems to be a tradition in sf of editors publishing their own work. No doubt you can give a dozen reasons for your following this (for instance, no other magazine will touch your work, not because it is bad—it isn't—but merely because you represent a rival; or you are unable to buy the kind of story you want to publish; or your rates are so low you get only the stories that have been rejected by everyone else; or . . .), but I still think it is a bad practice. Expecially when it leaves you open to accusations, such as appeared in the October FANTASTIC, of trying to advertise your own work, rather than produce a good magazine.

Please get rid of the so-called 'Classic' which mars both of your magazines. This is not a new request, and you are perhaps tired of reading it, and I know you have explained that it is not your decision to make. So collect all the letters asking for the reprints to be scrapped, put them in a sack, and present them to whoever *is* responsible for this waste of space. [*Happy now? TW*]

I would suggest that the eating of wild plants (editorial, Oct. FANTASTIC) is risky, if not outright anti-survival. You are liable to come down with a case of the galloping weedkillers. It seems odd to see rosehips described as "esoteric arcane items"! When I was at school in the Cotswolds, a dozen years ago, all the children would spend their autumn evenings and weekends gathering wild rosehips, which were paid for by the government at 2/- a pound (about 30¢, I think), and anyone who collected over ten pounds received a badge. The badges were status symbols, the money was extra pocket-money. These days, the rosehips are left to be eaten by wild birds. It is still possible to buy rosehip syrup, but I wonder how many rosehips there are in it?

I really like the cover by Todd and Bodé. How are those single-track thingummies steered? How are they even kept upright in rough country? Perhaps those yellow objects are not headlights, but pressor beams, used for balance and steering? The painting is excellent, though, the best I have seen on any magazine for some time. I can almost hear those engines thundering as the lead machine climbs that slope. I think they must be Laumerian 'Bolos,' of an early vintage.

Do you receive many letters like that of 'Cow-chip' Blane? If so, by all means publish them! No one will object to more humour in your magazines . . .

On the subject of distribution—I buy *Analog, F&SF, Galaxy,* and *If* from my local newstand, with no trouble. But as

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far as I know, there are only three places in London where I can get AMAZING and FANTASTIC, all three shops which specialize in sf. 'It's the same the whole world over,' apparently. Nil bastardae carborundum (don't let the bastards grind you down. Sorry.), the new appearance of your magazines, and the rise in quality of their contents, should lead to rising sales.

Which brings me to the subject of your prices. I can assure you, we have, finally, adopted a decimal system of currency, 100 new pence (symbol 'p') making one pound (still '£'). It is quite genuine, accepted throughout the country, and not a joke. You may drop the disbelieving (or deprecatory) inverted commas around the U.K. price on your covers. No one will laugh. [*Done.—TW*]

The rest of this letter is comments on the fiction which appeared in the September AMAZING, and the October FANTASTIC.

"The Second Trip" (by *The Demolished Man* out of *I will Fear No Evil?)* was disappointing. Everyone's problems were neatly solved at the end, without much effort on their part, almost despite themselves. I expect better from Silverberg—especially recent Silverberg.

"Junk Patrol" was a good background. When do we get the story?

"Myrra" left me wondering what sort of society values plantlife above human life. Whatever the author's intentions, he made me think, and I approve.

"What Time Do You Call This" deserves the answer "about thirty years too late." It is a tired old theme which deserves a rest.

"How Eliot and Jeanie became Parents" is full of what Blish, as Atheling, calls "said bookisms." Atheling would love the one on page 76: ' "Ugh," Jeanie looked away." Despite these, I enjoyed the story, but would have enjoyed it much more if they had been cut.

I didn't like "Shadow-Led" at all. I found Mrs. Tokkin quite a believable character, though. An elderly woman given to telling stories only she can see the point of.

I didn't like "Doll for the End of the Day," either. Twist-endings should be hidden with more care. I saw this one coming at least a page early.

Finally, a few comments on "The Dramaturges of Yan." This is very much the type of fiction I *do* like. The background is beautifully worked out, with some almost Vance-like touches, and the plot gathers speed with every section. I hope the next installment maintains the pace.

I also hope Lancer allows you to publish "Winged Quest." If you dare to solve the wolf/boy problem you left hanging with a deus ex machina, I shall write you a 'Cow-chip' type of letter—but nastier!

JOHN FORTEY
7, Inglewood Road
London, N.W.6, ENGLAND

Following on your remarks in your second paragraph, I'm mildly astonished by your desire that I publish my own "Winged Quest" here . . . and disappointed to tell you that it wasn't possible after all. As for the question of a deux ex machina *solution to the protagonist's quandary—it's a debatable (and I debated it), but the groundwork was laid in* Phoenix Prime, *so I don't believe it could be called a rabbit from my hat. In any case, the Lancer edition is now out, and I hope you'll find it to your taste.*

Don't look for Quest of the Wolf *(my title), though. Lancer has retitled it (*sigh*)* Star Wolf, *and I can only profer my apologies to Edmond Hamilton and Dave Van Arnam, both of whom have a more legitimate right to its use than I.—TW*

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Dear Ted,

What has become of FANTASTIC?!! In the innocence of my youth (1½ years ago—I'm presently 18: legal age of maturity in Alberta) I first purchased a pulpy looking prozine which I found hidden in a most secluded corner of the magazine rack in a local drugstore. Had I not a fanatical devotion to the recently discovered field of SF (and the even more recently discovered world of the SF magazine) I doubtless would never have picked up this most unattractive issue. But I felt it was my fannish duty or something, so I patriotically surrendered the 60¢ it cost and brought it home (careful lest someone else in the bus should see it and think me weird or perverted.) I examined its cover—Godawful!, thought I. Then I contemplated its title, FANTASTIC! The word seemed ironic adorning this loosely stapled stack of low quality paper. I decided, however, to proceed to read this *thing* (again out of deference to duty or somesuch), picked it up and bent back the front cover. In the process, the cover art rubbed off on my fingers—oh, well! I *read.* First the editorial, then the features, then the stories. And closed the magazine with a sigh of sublime satisfaction. . . . In two months I again searched the recesses of the magazine rack. . . .

Such was the inauspicious beginning of 1½ years of devoted reading of AMAZING and FANTASTIC. In that time I have been witness to a constant increase in the quality of your 'zines. Yesterday I found myself back at the magazine rack. "The times, they are a changin'!" The October FANTASTIC wrenched my eyes toward it. The Todd/Bodé cover was striking. The covers of the other SF prozines paled beside it. A month earlier I had been thrilled by the esthetic perfection of the Adkins cover on AMAZING (September issue). To think that *two* such covers would appear in such a short interval of time! The sophistication of the contents, needless to say, satisfied the promise of the cover. The stories were all highly entertaining (more than I can say of recent issues of several other prozines). David Bunch's "Doll for the End of the Day" was a gem. The features were as engrossing as always (although Panshin bewilders me—why the change of his term "creative fantasy" to "speculative fantasy"? It seems trivial to me. Other than that, his discussion of the didactic-romantic nature of SF was enlightening.) But . . .

Before you begin to think that life is a bouquet of roses, I must confess that I still find one feature of FANTASTIC (and AMAZING) an eyesore. You guessed it: the "Famous Fantastic/Amazing Classic." You claim it is beyond your editorial influence, but surely there must be *something* you can do about it (you've done so much else!). Perhaps, if you can't eliminate the "Classic," at least eliminate the illo that accompanies it. These pictures are so archaic as to reflect adversely on the quality of the magazine as a whole. And being so imposing compared to your other, smaller illustrations they stick out like a sore thumb to the potential buyer flicking through the magazine. If this you do, I promise to vote AMAZING a Hugo at the L.A. Worldcon. In fact, I'll vote it a Hugo even if you don't!

I have much more to say, but I'll stow it for another loc. I hate to be cliché, but *Keep up the good work!*

BILL KULYK
15407-80 Avenue
Edmonton 51,
Alberta, CANADA

Dear Ted,

I was able to get a copy of the October FANTASTIC, which is the reason for this

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letter. The cover material is a 100% improvement.

The cover painting itself was beautiful. I heard about the Todd & Bodé paintings that were at the Worldcons and now I know why. They're just mildly suggestive of cartoon work and yet they aren't cartoonish. Quite a feat. It is a pity that they cannot be sold without overprinting. How about getting a printer just to print up the paintings themselves? The only problem, of course, is: will they sell? I think the Todd & Bodé one would.

As to the stories themselves they ranged from highly enjoyable to highly puzzling. I'm glad to see Wilmar H. Shiras back after these many years. Although her story was a rather minor one I liked it. "How Eliot and Jeanie Became Parents" is a mind bender. It was very hallucinatory. Totally insane. All I can say is: more Littenberg! The story by Bunch was highly puzzling. I really don't know how to react to it. Very strange.

L. Sprague de Camp's column is the best thing I've read since the Moskowitz articles many years ago. And Cy Chauvin is correct, they are much better than SaM's series. I think the reason for de Camp's superiority is because he considers his subjects human and not just a series of publication dates. I am awaiting with baited breath the eventual publication of de Camp's full book. It should be great. (Maybe there should be a new Hugo award for best non-fiction about Sf.)

Alexei Panshin's column is bearable. I've never really enjoyed the technical aspects of literature. Maybe if I try I might really like it, but I doubt it. Nonetheless, I think Panshin's column should stay because there is so little literary examination of Sf.

Paula Marmor pinpoints the reason why I like *Blows Against the Empire*. Just the idea of hijacking a starship gives one that good ole sense of wonder again. It's really surprising the amount of Sf in rock music. Hendrix used it occasionally. An example is "Up from the Skies" in the *Axis: Bold As Love* album. Then there is Crosby, Stills & Nash with "Wooden Ships." In the March 4, 1971 issue of *Rolling Stone* (#77) there is an interview with Steve Stills. He talks about the idea of making an Sf movie beginning with "Wooden Ships." By the way, I read somewhere that Ted Stúrgeon was working on a screenplay of "Wooden Ships." Haven't heard anything else. Anybody out there know anything else about it? It would be interesting to see a rock-Sf movie about wooden ships and hijacking starships. Great fun I'd say.

Please, Ted, do reprint Panshin's review of *I Will Fear No Evil*. I'd like to know how he feels about it since he is something of an expert on RAH. His *Heinlein in Dimension* was excellent. Maybe he could write a new that was a little shorter? In any event I think it would be very informative.

To David Wm. Hulvey concerning con costs: Right On! The cost of the World-Con is verging upon idiocy. What are the costs of the L.A. con? I'm afraid to guess.

Well, I hope to catch the December ish and be able to read Brunner's tale. So, until then goodby. Take care & peace.

MICHAEL WALSH
9111 McNair Drive
Alexandria, Va., 22309

Alexei would prefer we not reprint his review, but I can tell you that he felt pretty much the way most of those of us who grew up thinking Heinlein the finest writer in sf feel—sad and disappointed. —TW

Dear Mr. White:

I have enjoyed reading Alexei Panshin's column in recent issues of FANTASTIC, particularly his efforts in trying to propose a "new paradigm" for sf. But

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as Panshin himself wrote in his draft for the Twayne series, it still all sounds like whistling in the dark.

For one thing, he doesn't elucidate his definition fully enough. He spends so much time explaining the mimesis-didaxis-romance thing that he neglects other areas. The "distance and difference" in the definition seem tightly related, but an inclusive "or" there would be better, I think; and the nature of this "distance-difference" should be elucidated—are the "removed worlds" strictly referring to space and time, or to other things as well? Further, the term "speculative fantasy" is of doubtful usefulness. "Speculative" qualifies and reduces the scope of the genus "fantasy." It seems to me that the word "fantasy" itself is sufficient as an all-inclusive term for science fiction and the literature designated by the narrowed-down "fantasy." And if we wish to preserve the rough distinction between those two, I see nothing wrong with retaining the old terminology: everybody then at least knows what we're talking about.

But it is Panshin's division of "three possible goals for fictional narrative" that causes most puzzlement. I am not familiar with, nor could I find a copy of, Scholes and Kellogg's *The Nature of Narrative,* upon which Panshin apparently bases his division. While that study may provide a convincing argument for the mimesis-didaxis-romance categories, Panshin does not. The categories seem adequate at first glance, but such simplicity urges a second look, whereupon the threefold classification appears as far from exhaustive. The definition of romance as "the expression of the aesthetic" is particularly troublesome because unusual—and if it is some special definition it requires considerably more discussion than Panshin gives it. If we follow his definition rigorously, then we are forced to classify as romances most of the novels of sensibility, stream-of-consciousness fiction, and that sort of fiction which strives for the realization of "pure form." Now some of these can be seen as sharing significantly in the quality of mimesis, but I think that, within Panshin's framework, they must be viewed primarily as romance (and anyway, as I shall discuss further in a moment, all fiction is mimetic in some way). As examples of "pure romance," Panshin gives *The King of Elfland's Daughter* and *The Worm Ouroboros;* thus we must place the works of Woolf, Parker, Joyce, and Proust (et al.) alongside Dunsany and Eddison, which would surely be inviting justifiable scorn.

A problem arises, then, when we try to classify some works like *To the Lighthouse* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man;* indeed, classifying *any* work into Panshin's ingenious Venn-diagram scheme is an exceedingly uncertain procedure, as Panshin himself seems to realize in his abundant use of mays, mights, maybes and perhapses. Particularly, pure mimesis, didaxis or romance do not exist, and it is doubtful if they even *can* exist. No fiction is entirely mimetic—even *romans à clef*—because there is always artistic mediation. Only if with a tape recorder and a behavioral psychologist's training we report everything we observe will we have pure mimesis—and then we would not have fiction to philosophy and homily; and similarly, no art can be pure romance because some element of mimesis always enters by virtue of the very humanity of the artist.

So we are left saying that certain fiction is *predominantly* mimetic, or *predominantly* didactic or romantic, which is finally not helpful at all, especially when we realize that some fiction can be predominantly none of these three. And to limit "speculative fantasy" to didactic-romance is to impose restrictions I am

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not sure would be desirable: experimentation in sf is now quite common, and there is ample room, for example, for "pure" aesthetics and the novels of form or sensibility. I agree with Panshin in the optimistic belief that sf can be the predominant literary genre of the near future. The past century of "predominantly mimetic" fiction will, I think, be viewed as an anomaly in the overwhelming body of "non-mimetic" literature—this despite the doctrinaire and intolerant utterances of various *literati* who consider themselves, somehow, the sole possessors of Truth (for an especially good example—out of many others—of such pontification, see Mary McCarthy, "The Fact in Fiction," *Partisan Review*, 27 (Summer 1960), 438-58; for her, rigid, this-worldly realism is the essence of the novel—any "unrealistic" novel is hence not really a novel, etc. ad naus.).

In a concluding ironic digression, it is interesting to note within Panshin's critical framework that what is understood as "straight" science fiction at least approaches mimesis in its efforts to "ease the suspension of disbelief;" at least it strives for a degree of mimesis in an *illusion* of reality and logic. So if we sf fans want to enter the old "purist" hassle, we can note (to the horror of almost everybody) that, ironically, "straight" science fiction is probably the "least pure" of all non-mimetic literature!

JEFFREY S. ANDERSON
1707 Sebring St. NW
Huntsville, Ala., 35805

In a sense, each of Panshin's columns is a groping towards an ideal expression of his ideas—and in a very real sense they are 'first drafts' for his book on the subject, which will be published late this year by Scribners. I think you'll find subsequent columns have gone into these definitions to a greater degree. —TW

Dear Mr. White,

I bought both the August and October issues of FANTASTIC today, at the same place, and is my wont (o wow) read all the features first, then felt an irresistable urge to write before the reading the stories. From your letter-col, this is apparently not uncommon. It's like a professional fanzine, with two columns, reviews, an article, and letters, combined with pro fiction.

I think you were too hard on *Blackmark*. I discovered how to read it. First you skim through the printed part once, then read it again paying most of your attention to the pictures. It's a lot easier than trying to read and follow the action simultaneously. It must be getting fairly good distribution since I found a copy. In a nation-wide department store chain yet. Sandwiched between *Siddhartha* and *Have Space Suit—Will Travel.*

Panshin has a good idea, a great definition. It does seem to work for everything from *Don Rodriguez* to *Tau Zero* with no trouble. But then he goes and says something like "I don't think the classic writers of science fiction . . . will be among those making the transition." Here he comes up with a new paradigm that, as far as I can see, frees SF to go in any direction, and then says that it can't stay where it is as well. We could have both; it doesn't have to be an either/or situation. It's just like fandom, you're either a fannish fan or a sercon fan (I hope I got the term right, I'm new at this). Why in hell can't you be both? J. G. Ballard is a good writer, but does Sturgeon have to stop writing because he writes in the older mode? It seems a shame to come up with an apparently perfect definition and exchange one provincialism for another.

JOHN LEAVITT
Maple Avenue
Newton, N.H., 03858

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I think you're confusing modes with technical levels of competance. At least one major writer in the sf field who made his mark in the forties has let it be known that he doesn't feel competant to compete with present-day writers. (I think he's being too hard on himself.) But surely those writers who, in the forties, were capable of grinding out low-grade space-opera cannot be expected to keep up with present-day advances in writing standards —and, for the most part, have not, as the reading of some of their paperbacks will prove. Cardboard characterization, comic-book plots and semi-literate prose are now obsolete; the standards have progressed. But I agree with you that sf is large enough to include all kinds *of sf —even cardboard space-opera, for which some readership must remain, if the sales of the* Captain Future *books are taken to mean anything. As for "sercon" fans, the word means "serious and constructive," and was originally used in a derogative fashion to describe those fans who, like missionaries among the fun-loving heathens, wanted to elevate fandom to loftier planes. Today the word is (out of ignorance) used more often to describe fans who are serious in their appreciation of sf. In that sense, it is certainly possible to be both types of fan simultaneously—and many are. —TW*

Dear Ted:

Nice cover on the October FANTASTIC: Bodé and Todd do some nice things together.

I was delighted to see Wilmar Shiras' name on the cover because her *Children of the Atom* is one of my favorites and I greatly enjoyed "Backward, Turn Backward." But "Shadow-led" was a big disappointment. The idea is interesting, but she does nothing with it. It goes nowhere: there is no story or real conflict. The ending with the Professor as Deus ex Machina made me feel that this was a story made up on the spur of the moment to amuse a small child ("And then the Professor came, and gave the little boy a shot, and the boy woke up and then they all went home and lived happily ever after.") I don't think this should have been published. The only reason I can see for publishing it is because she is a "name" author—but a story like this, from one who has so little published, does her reputation more harm than good.

"Doll for the End of the Day" is a strange little thing. The over-writing, said-bookisms and dialect of the man with the doll led me to believe that the story was some sort of parody which didn't quite come off. More than anything else it reminds me of a story from an old EC comic.

"How Eliot and Jeanie Became Parents" was a pleasant surprise after the other two short stories. It was a trip—funny, surreal, and very enjoyable.

Looking forward to some good fiction in the next ("Guilford") issue.

LISA TUTTLE
No. 6 Pine Forest Circle
Houston, Texas, 77027

I hope you enjoyed Mrs. Shiras' "Reality" last issue. To appreciate these stories you must take into account, I think, that they are in the form of tall-tales, and that the Professor serves as a sort of deus ex machina *in each of them, even "Backward, Turn Backward." —TW*

Dear Ted,

As I told you in my previous letter, I've not had time to write concerning the most recent issues of AMAZING and FANTASTIC, and I fear the necessity to skim over those issues will carry over here too. But I just discovered the December FANTASTIC on the stands yesterday, and felt I had to write as soon as possible.

The reason, of course, is the superb

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cover; I've talked a great deal in previous letters about the visual appearance of the magazine, and you've printed many of these comments. Let me now say, then, that the December cover is superb, one of the most striking I've seen on any of the prozines in a long time. The artwork itself isn't all *that* great—you've had some better in the past—but the combination of sharp colors, heavy slick stock, and an excellent graphic picture create a most attractive total package. Certainly the magazine stands out from any other of the sf mags on the stands, and probably from most magazines of any kind. This, as you've said, has to be a basic purpose behind a front cover, and this issue most definitely fulfills that purpose.

In the same vein, the new title page layout is equally interesting and attractive. I could quibble about the nearly identical jobs here for both magazines, but I won't—it's probably cheaper this way, and doesn't make that much difference anyway. But like the cover, this new design is both more readable and more attractive than previous job, and I think this is also the case with the slightly redesigned column heads. Constant improvement is something we're coming to expect, Ted—you're in danger of spoiling your readers, if you keep this up!

Without having time to read all the fiction, I do want to take a moment to commend you on the Guilford Conference idea itself. In the 10 years I've been reading the prozines, I've never come across such an idea, or even heard the concept mentioned. Frankly, I can't think of anyone who won't benefit in the long run from this special issue. The writers themselves, most beginning or at least in need of greater exposure, can't help but be aided by the confidence (and financial aid!) you've shown in their work by publishing this special issue. The sf field as a whole gets exposed to some of the younger writers, several of whom have been seen only in a few original anthologies and the pages of your magazines, some appearing here for the first time. And the regular reader of the magazine gets a completely different issue from the norm, something to keep him off balance and a bit interested in seeing what rabbit Ted White will produce next. Nice, Ted, very nice.

In reference to the continuing prozines—vs.—distributors battle, I'd like to quote from a recent letter I got from Stephen Gregg:

> Went down to Atlanta (GA.) today for the first time in several months. The change in the sf scene was overwhelming. There are two major newstands in the downtown area which are not strictly pornoshops. On my last visit, both carried AMAZING/FANTASTIC, *If/Galaxy, Analog, F&SF*—along with the other zines that are now defunct. Today neither carried *If, Galaxy,* or FANTASTIC, and only a few AMAZINGS. In one, the sf book shelf now consists of some 10 titles—it did contain closer to 60. . . . The only newstand in a 35-40 mile radius around here (Sandy Springs, South Carolina) did carry all of the major sf zines, but they haven't had AMAZING/FANTASTIC in several months. I asked what had happened, and they don't know. To paraphrase: "We'd like to stock them, we've asked about them because we get a lot of requests for them, but the distributor doesn't send them.

The situation these days in the Rochester/Syracuse area is very little better. In the Rochester metropolitan area, a large upstate New York city/county complex of some 500,000 people, I've located only

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two outlets for the six major prozines—one downtown department store, and one downtown large newstand. A couple of drugstores in the area occasionally get a few copies of one or more in, but on no regular basis I've been able to discover. In Syracuse, there's one newstand downtown that usually gets most of the prozines. But in the Syracuse University area—with 20,000+ students, an active SF group, the Syracuse SF Libary collections, and several bookstores stocking many sf paperbacks—you can rarely find all the prozines. One store usually gets the ubiquitous *Analog,* and *Galaxy/If,* the other *sometimes* AMAZING/FANTASTIC, neither *F&SF* regularly. The situation has worsened considerably in the past three years, too.

Also, I've never seen either *Blackmark* or the Bantam EVO-Gothic Blimp volume on the stands anywhere in Rochester, Syracuse, New York, or from here to Boston, including Providence. There were some copies of *Deadbone* on the stands in the Rochester and Syracuse areas for a short time, but these were removed (or sold out, but I highly doubt that) after a few weeks.

Alexei's column continues excellent, perhaps ever better as he's now dealing in more specific topics, the relationships between sf and the academic world. At times, some of his previous discussions on the nature of "sf" crossed the line from anaysis to semantic argument, but there's certainly no danger of that sort of thing here. I haven't yet done more than skimmed Lundwall's book, though I did buy it out of curiosity; but I remember your glowing review of Alexei's book on approximately the same topic in Yandro a few years back, and remember my interest and excitement over that volume. Instead, we get this thing, and *The Universe Makers*—which I've already seen hailed in review as a significant critical work. Certainly that volume is worth reading, if for no other reason than discovering how the man behind sf in the top current sf publisher feels about the field, but. . . .

I wonder where the Magazine and Book Writing and Production Major went to school? While majoring in drama at Syracuse, I had a chance to take a few courses in the Newhouse School of Journalism, and whatever you can say about Newhouse the man, the courses were if anything eminently practical, concerned with practical applications, rather than arcane theories. In one magazine class, for example, a major part of the course involved an in-depth study of a single magazine, including discussions with the editor, etc. (It was for this class that Lisa did that study of AMAZING you mention in the last issue of that magazine—she picked that because I'd already chosen *Analog.* Incidentally, I sent a summery of some of my report to Conde Nast, a while before Ben Bova was announced as new editor of *Analog,* and received a very nice letter back. I wonder if they will take any of my suggestions seriously.)

On the October FANTASTIC:

Only a few notes on the lettercolum, beginning with your answer to my letter. Mainly thanks, really, for letting us know exactly what you've been trying to do with the magazine. Part of the reason I think so many fans really enjoy your AMAZING/FANTASTIC "fanzines" is the sort of "fanzine editor honesty" you have with the readers. You've kept the readers abreast of financial problems, material problems, plans for the future, editorial decisions, etc., both in detailed editorials and honest, very frank and to-the-point comments to letters, particularly those (like mine here) which disagree with you, or take issue with a policy or opinion you've expressed. I know of no other prozine editor today who has (or whom I expect

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to) talked as you have here about exactly what he has and hasn't been offered, in terms of fiction, and I know this overall honesty is one of the things *I* particularly enjoy about the magazines.

Incidentally, as I'm sure you're aware (but some of your readers may not be), the fourth Firesign Theatre album, *I Think We're All Bozos on This Bus,* is perhaps even more specifically sf than *Dwarf.* It's more ambitious and far more complex than any of their previous recordings, with more overt sf and much less obvious humor. [*See my review in the March* AMAZING.—*TW*]

The obvious answer to the rising convention registration fee problem is to do what's been talked of for many years—separate the Hugo voting from the convention entirely. Set up a separate, permanent committee to take care of all the nominating, voting and ballotting. This not only takes the work off the shoulders of the convention committees, but it also removes temptation. Conventions in the past haven't been known to stick especially closely to the Hugo rules, and a separate group administering the whole thing could very well be the solution to this, too. I'd also like to see a nominal fee made necessary as a requirement for Hugo voting, just as it is for voting in TAFF and for convention sites at the Worldcons. This way, those *really* interested in voting for the Hugos could pay out a dollar or so to the committee, and get their vote. They wouldn't have to pay the $4 or more required to convention membership—and convention members who have no interest in the Hugos wouldn't get the vote they now get, simply by being members of the convention. The only major problem I can see with this is agreeing on a suitable committee, but I see many benefits if it gets through. What do you think? Are there major holes I haven't seen?

A second possibility in lowering convention rates would be to keep the rate for converting from supporting to attending low, right up to and including the convention conversion. This would allow fans to purchase the cheaper supporting memberships whether they were certain they would attend or not, but convert to full membership if they did decide to go without a major outlay. Yet at the same time, rates for attending membership bought at the convention itself could be kept relatively high, thus discouraging walk-in attendence as the conventions are trying to do. Thus fandom wouldn't be paying the price to keep non-fans away, as seems to be the situation now.

JERRY LAPIDUS
54 Clearview Drive
Pittsford, N.Y., 14534

As I've mentioned before, the national distributor effectively controls the number of copies we print by dictating the number they will accept for distribution. When sales fall off, the distributor's first reaction is to cut back correspondingly the number of copies we print—our "print order." This in turn leaves fewer copies to be distributed and sooner or later the point is reached where distribution becomes exceedingly spotty on a national scale. We—and, I would guess, our competitors, save Analog*—have now reached this point. In fact, it occurred early in 1971. Fortunately, our sales have stabilized at this level (to my surprise) rather than continuing their downward spiral. Since profits are largely determined by the* percentage *of copies sold rather than a specific* number, *this has worked out for better than might be expected—it's kept us going. But equally obviously this sort of scanty, hit-or-miss distribution is going to make it difficult for us to attract new readers; many potential readers aren't even aware of our existence! For that reason each one of you who interests a friend or acquaintance in our maga-*

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zines is doing us an enormous favor. Alexei Panshin's original book on sf (the one I reviewed from manuscript in Yandro *several years ago) dealt specifically with post-WW2 sf and a selected group of sf authors and made no attempt to do the now-standard "Since Plato" history of sf. The book on which he and his wife Cory are now working for Scribners has had its genesis in the pages of this magazine and will, in final form, be a complete and coherent entity, for which the columns here are in actuality extended notes. Again, it will make use of the historical approach only incidentally. In my opinion, this is the only kind of book about sf presently worth doing. I see nothing in particular wrong with your proposals for altering the Hugo award committee structure, but I'm sure others will have plenty of arguments to offer. Probably the only valid one is that fandom has never been able to support a sustaining committee of any nature, for any purpose (fandom is too anarchistic, and fans do come and go rather unpredictably, the whole thing being only a hobby, after all)—and the only effective way to insure its continuance would be the election of new members on a regular basis. This in turn leads to yet more politicking, of which fandom already has a surfeit. Petty-politics are probably the most objectionable feature fandom has to offer as it is; do we need more? As for walk-in members, a great many fans have traditionally put off the decision of worldcon attendance until the last moment; I'm told the high "at the door" prices at Boston did not discourage these fans so much as annoy them. In any case, there is nothing wrong with walk-in members—the objection is to people totally uninterested in sf or fandom showing up and causing trouble or cluttering the premises. These could be better discouraged by keeping mundane publicity (in the local newspapers, tv, etc.) to an absolute minimum. This isn't hard if you aren't one of those convention chairmen who likes to see his picture in the papers—but flies in the face of the SFWA's desire to publicize science fiction and sf writers to the masses (an equally vain notion, I think, and productive of little but a warm glow for those whose names or pictures are printed) which has at recent conventions become a major campaign. Sooner or later this conflict (which first popped up in 1952!) will have to be resolved: are the World Science Fiction Conventions for the benefit of the sf fans (who created them, support them and run them) or for the commercial exploitation of sf professionals, without whom there could hardly* be *any sf? It's a perplexing problem, with much to be said for each side. I don't see any resolutions in the offing, but I can offer this good word: the 1973 convention in Toronto will be cheaper. By how much, I don't know, but that was their campaign pledge and I trust they'll keep it. —TW*

Dear Ted,

I don't know whether to say the December FANTASTIC was good or bad. Certainly the conclusion of "The Dramaturges of Yan" was bad. In your editorial on *2001* not long ago you said that some fans didn't like the film because it didn't explain itself. If you read Clarke's novelization of *2001* you know that it went just the opposite direction and explained much too much. However, the book is good at confirming the moviegoer's analysis of the film as man in a test tube with alien influences behind evolution.

The trouble with Brunner is that he had his characters standing around explaining what happened back in you name the year. Asimov's technique in *Foundation* of beginning each segment with a historical explanation from a supposed encyclopedia, etc., is about the only technique (outside of not explaining things at all and leaving the reader to

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his wits) that is half decent in giving historical perspective. Dialogue, not history lessons, is what characters should give out with.

Though a goodly number of the short short stories which you publish are failures, I do think that it is the best way to bring in new blood. I recall Roger Zalazny's early stories in AMAZING from back around 1962-63. They were generally good but scarcely related to what he has written since; but they were a beginning.

Effinger's "Iguana" stories are good fan fiction and would be better printed in one of the better fanzines. There were no new insights here; only jabs and jibes.

I do believe that you made a minor breakthrough with your own writing in "Things Are Tough All Over." But, at the same time, I suspect editors who publish their own writing. How about trying for some appearances in other prozines instead of publishing your own material and use the space for stories by new writers; the same goes for the classic reprint.

"Cartoon" may have won my BLECHH award for the issue if "Garden of Eden" hadn't been such a mass of clichés. But as Robert Silverberg's writing shows *misery loves company* and people seem to be suckers for cruddy writing about hurtin' people. Dystopias, and the more dystopian the better, or "if things are so bad why aren't they worse?" (better known as: More of the same, only worse), seem to be the run of things. More writers should take a few hints from Olaf Stapledon and Cordwainer Smith and the opening to Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*, and work on the idea that the time to come will continue to be both the best of times and the worst of times. Brunner is one of the greatest practitioners of "more of the same, only worse" as *Stand on Zanzibar* shows so well. It could be 1976 as easily as the year 2000. All you have to do is pull the Sorcerer's Apprentice Routine and be a Prophet of Doom.

Dozois did quite well with "Wires." However, I liked the insanity more than the plot (if there was one). He got inside the mind better than he did inside the society.

Cheers for Alexei Panshin. This is his best article in FANTASTIC since the beginning of the series. The change of the title of the series finally illustrates the futility of trying to define something as ephemeral as SF. As George Hay said: Science Fiction is whatever people call science fiction. Sometimes you have to settle for circular definitions rather than waste as much space as Panshin did with Creative Fantasy and Speculative Fantasy. Fantasy that is good must be creative and any fiction that is intended to be thought-provoking must be speculative and not tired drivel.

I had heard a lot of kidding about the Guilford Gafia. The stories you have published would seem to prove that they do a bit more than gafiate at Guilford, but there will have to be much more improvement before Guilford loses its reputation for gafiating.

Your covers and interior illustrations are becoming better and better. Keep Mike Hinge working. I haven't made up my mind if I like his work or that of Mike Kaluta better. The Chaffee cover was good. Your overall covers show better planning and composition than the vast majority of the other prozines.

I'm glad to see you'll be printing some more Lupoff stories. His new novel *Sacred Locomotive Flies* was a disappointment, however. One of these days Lupoff may write a better novel than Ted Mark. I do like his short stories better than the longer stuff.

Don't get me wrong. I do think that FANTASTIC is improving. You'll have to

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go through growing pains along with your newer writers.

JOHN ROBINSON
129 Rosemont Street
Albany, N.Y., 12203

Ted,

Read "Things Are Tough All Over;" I was not impressed. Little things detracted my attention, and so, interest. Just personal—I felt the story should have ended with "I'm a civilized American"; it seems to me in wiping out half of China, considering the accuracy of our missile guidance systems, would put a sizeable dent in their population, less than half of the country is suited for the agrarian farm methods practiced by a majority of the people, so practically all of the people of China proper live along a narrow band straddling the sea and up the rivers; it is unlikely C's population will ever raise to two billion for even with modern or foreseeable farming systems it would be unable to support even its present population through the years it would require for doubling; in addition birth control, after-the-fact, is being practiced there.

But those are all just picked bones. What made me mad, really mad, was Barnes giving away the baby. I would have given the entire lot of meat away just to hang onto the kid, but then, I just got my hands on a dandy recipe.

In all, I thought the other stories from the Guilford Conference of interest but lacking something. For example, "Garden of Eden" was at times almost poetic, yet each time a point of impact was reached Jay let everything drop and skipped back. My interest kept jumping up and down, not a child with joy but like a man who can't make up his mind to stand or sit.

The talent revealed in these stories proves science fiction will not be without capable writers in the future.

Speaking of the future, will Ultimate Publishing return to monthly printing of its lead magazines? It seems strange to me you stopped and went bi-monthly. If your circulation was not greatly increased by this move, then it would seem if you can sell 40 thou copies each month of both mags you would be ahead to publish monthly. Remember the grade school math problems? If Ted can sell four apples every month and make ten cents profit from each, is he not a fool to offer his apples for sale only six times a year? [*See my reply to Malcolm Wright. —TW*]

J. R. YEARWOOD
2760 Sargent Ave.
San Pablo, Ca. 94806

Dear Ted:

The Guilford Conference Writers ish is a mixed bag, in my opinion. Particularly strong were Jay Haldeman's "Garden of Eden" and "Wires" by Gardner Dozois. Haldeman and Dozois, though quite different in approach, have a distinctive flair for characterizing situation. I was specifically taken by Haldman's use of simile, ". . . thoughts like wool in my head," and repetition of words and phrases, "the system . . ." He also introduces the necessary background material very subtlely, while continuing to advance the storyline at a steady rate. As a clincher, the social dystopia he writes so well of remains a less than distant threat to us. It's odd, but the *Fantastic Illustrated* feature you did run by Jay Kinney had elements of the same theme in it. From this, I draw the conclusion that many thinking people see the potential revolutionary reaction to growing American fascism as tainted with the same disregard for democracy rampant in rightwing military dictatorship. It's a sobering thought. So, instead of waving the flag, and taking a few tokes of Jesus, the jest-us-folks variety of common man

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will have pills and gum to chase those doubts away. Dozois' description of death is excellent. He has a tendency, however, to let his imagery become too profuse. This minor fault, though, is overshadowed by his metaphor for social control, authority, tradition and custom: The Wires. And when they are yanked, it really hurts. I'm impressed also by the universality of his situation: the dying soldier could be in Nam, Korea, a dozen other points around the globe or with Pico and Alvaredo finding their way out of East LA back to that gook valley.

Your own "Things Are Tough All Over" hit hard. I thought I was inured to such wanton violence—after all, there are My Lais all over the world tonight in some way, shape or form. Still, to be confronted with such a stark vision of racism and aggression ruins my appetite. Such a story makes me slightly sick. Then it makes me want to yell 'umma gawa!' with either a sermon or a machine gun in my hand to annihilate the diseased growth Paul Barnes represents. Luckily, reason returns so that I feel ashamed. But damnit Ted, how much longer are the Joes and Kalleys and their insane death-machine leaders gonna keep fuckin' us over?! Jeez, I know that last sentence is irrational, yet I can't regret it. The way I feel, I can surely assert that this story made the point "A Boy and His Dog" couldn't for me.

"Cartoon" was ok. I can't say I got off with it. The only small rush I felt was at the end, and that was only because the story's finish reminded me too much of the kind of thing Janet Fox tries and fails at all too frequently.

Piglet's . . . 'cuse me . . . Effinger's story reminds me a lot of a Firesign Theater album. I almost know he's laughing at the corners of his mouth at standard comix superhero conventions and the wonders of law-in-order as personified by the hall pass. Tell Donald G. Long that, if the story is what I think it is, here is his "sword of satire."

Gosh, there's even a loc from Bhob—oh, right-ho, daddy-o, with the faanish spelling yet—Stewart, the Legendary Man who Put his Foot behind his Head. He repeated this fanoclastic act at Noreascon for the adoring masses—me included. Really, and Burbee didn't even have to be there and tell his Watermelon Story. Which is a sneaky way of asking you, did Pete Graham actually exist? [*Yes—TW*]

DAVID WM. HULVEY
Rt. 1, Box 198
Harrisonburg, Va., 22801

I decided to publish the three foregoing letters without intervening comment because they illustrate quite sharply the divergence of intelligently articulated opinion on the stories in our December "Guilford Conference" issue. Each of the above readers enjoyed quite different aspects in those stories, and often their opinions meet in a headlong clash. This, I think, gives a good example of the problem any editor has in selecting stories for his magazine. Any story I buy will be appreciated by some of you and damned by some of you and one reason I publish your comments on the stories (rather than just your arguments with other letter-writers, with me, or with our columnists) is to illuminate this breadth of taste and perception that exists among us all. One cannot help but stop and think a moment when he reads someone's opinion on a story which is in opposition to his own. And there is so much to look for, to appreciate, in many stories which we might as easily dismiss casually or out of hand. Keep that in mind while reading the stories in this *issue. . . .—Ted White*

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(Continued from page 4)

Star Trek (which will follow his letter, rest assured) have nothing to do with deifying *The Outer Limits*, a television program which I've seen only rarely and in which I took little interest. Okay? Back to Mark:

"Don't misunderstand me. *The Outer Limits* was a marvelous SF program and I enjoyed it greatly but *Star Trek* was also a damn good SF show and in some ways it was superior to *The Outer Limits*. Let me go on to tell you why.

"It was stated by Lundwall that *Star Trek* 'stubbornly' held onto the SF values of the pulp era of the '30's and '40's. And after making that monumental statement he never went on to justify it with examples of those values or how *Star Trek* supposedly catered to them. And you, Mr. White, after delivering a very apt and deserved criticism of Lundwall's book turned around and agreed with him on *Star Trek's* alleged position.

"Now I am not exactly a novice in science fiction. My love affair with modern SF began a little over 10 years ago and since then my enthusiasm for the field has developed and gotten stronger. At the same time my collection of science fiction volumes and collectors items has grown tremendously. (I have van Vogt's *Slan* in the original magazine version.) I have cultivated my 'sense of wonder,' as we call it, to the point where I can appreciate the whole spectrum of SF from E. E. Smith to Harlan Ellison, as long as it isn't garbage like that Perry Rhodan crap from Germany. I have grown up with SF and, although I make no claim to being a great science fiction historian, I know where it has been in the last 60 years and I like the direction it is taking at the present.

"And because of this I cannot agree with the sort of criticism of *Star Trek* propounded by Lundwall and hacks like Baxter. (I say that about Baxter because his *Science Fiction in the Cinema* was full of errors and read like a Christmas-vacation-quickie research paper.)

"First let's look at *Star Trek* from an SF standpoint and then take a look at *The Outer Limits*.

"*Star Trek* was definitely a part of the sub-class of science fiction called 'space opera.' And so what's wrong with a good space opera? Nothing! There are many writers on the contemporary SF scene who have been made by the space opera. How about Murray Leinster or A. Bertram Chandler or even some of the works of Poul Anderson?

"Space operas do not have to carry the connotations of BEM's or fantastic Zap Guns. They can be good adult SF and, in many cases, the mainstay of the field as the writers I have mentioned, along with many other, have proven.

"*Star Trek* was just such an adult, and I stress the word adult, space opera. It was entertaining, thought provoking and introduced many people who were not familiar with SF to some of the field's basic conventions and techniques. I am speaking of FTL drives, far flung galactic civilizations, parallel worlds as well as parallel planetary culture development, human colonies in distant star systems and on and on and on. If indeed this makes *Star Trek* subservient to the values of the pulp era then I'm afraid that all of us who are involved as writers or fans in the print form of SF are guilty of the same failings. I have just read two novels by Leinster and Chandler which, as wild space operas, make the space opera-ness of *Star Trek* seem pale by comparison." (In my opinion Mark just lost the point in this paragraph, but I'll reserve my reasoning until he finishes.)

"I am not blindly showering praise on *Star Trek*," he continues. "To be sure, some of the 3rd season shows were far inferior to the standards set by the pro-

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gram's own 1st and 2nd seasons. To cite examples, there were 'Whom Gods Destroy,' 'Plato's Stepchildren' (an attempt to recapture the theme of a good 2nd season episode called 'Who Mourns for Adonais?'), 'The Savage Curtain,' 'And the Children Shall Lead' as well as a couple of other episodes which were not quite up to snuff. Although the 3rd season did produce some very good stories such as 'Is There In Truth No Beauty?'

"Now let's look at *The Outer Limits* and see if it was as flawless as some people seem to think it was."

(At this point, Mark spends most of a page, single-spaced, rehashing old *Outer Limits* stories, contrasting the ones he liked with those he didn't, providing some plot synopses of the latter which admittedly sound pretty silly, and concludes as follows:)

"And again I am not condemning *The Outer Limits.* Indeed, when someone asks me how many science fiction TV series there have been, I invariably say two, *The Outer Limits* and *Star Trek* (with a leaning toward *Star Trek.)* All those Irwin Allen kiddie extravaganzas were pure crap and the *Twilight Zone* was not SF often enough to qualify. And *The Invaders* was just a souped-up version of *The Fugitive.*

"Lundwall also seemed to have another complaint about *Star Trek.* It was a petty one from a petty book but a complaint nonetheless.

"The producers of *Star Trek* did do a bit of capitalizing on the show's popularity with their releasing of a catalog of souvenir items. These souvenirs contained some interesting items such as scripts and film clips and also some rather silly articles such as 'flight deck certificates' and 'Federation citizenship cards.' Now I have no interest in the latter types of memorabilia but I do have a couple of scripts by Sturgeon and one by Norman Spinrad as well as a collection of film clips mounted as slides. Lundwall called them 'holy objects and icons.' I also have a number of unprinted cover proofs from *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* which cost me dearly, in my collection along with slides from other SF artists. Holy objects? Icons? Hell no! They are just parts of my overall collection of science fiction culture just as the *Star Trek* scripts and slides are. I certainly don't see anything wrong in them and I wish that *The Outer Limits* would have allowed collectors to purchase copies of some of their best scripts as well as clips from their stories. As a buff I take science fiction very seriously but, dammit, it should be fun too!

"That's about all. All I'm saying is that I'm sick of all the unsubstantiated criticism that has been dumped on *Star Trek* by some SF writers and editors when obviously the fans loved it. I'm sure there were a certain percentage of viewers who watched the show as 'Star Trek fans' only instead of as SF fans in general like myself. I know because I've met some.

"But no one can tell me that there weren't a helluva lot of dismayed SF buffs who desperately showered NBC with letters and phone calls when they attempted to cancel the show at the end of its 1st and 2nd seasons. The reason they did it was because they had witnessed a phenomena the likes of which had not been seen since *The Outer Limits.* That phenomena was the type of science fiction that they had been reading previously only in the paperbacks and magazines suddenly transported to the TV screen in full color and with imaginative special effects.

"So if we are going to condemn *Star Trek* for what it tried to be then we had better take a good hard look at the kind of work that some of the established,

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big-name writers are doing now and have done in the past.

Nuff said.

Mark Stephenson
2305 W. Country Lane
McHenry, Illinois 60050

"P.S.: 'The Menagerie' didn't win the Hugo for nothin' you know!"

A LITTLE HISTORICAL perspective here: I grew up in a family which did not believe in television and which to this day does not own a television set. And I did not acquire a set of my own for some years thereafter. For that reason, all my tv watching during the late forties, the fifties, and the first few years of the sixties, was done on a hit-or-miss basis in front of friends' sets. Therefore my perspective is not one of someone overwhelmed with the tv mystique—reading remains my primary source of entertainment when it comes to fiction of any sort. But if I didn't absorb six hours or more of television every day during my childhood, I was not ignorant of it either. I well recall the meetings of the local high-school science/science fiction group (three or four of us who hung around together) at various members' homes to watch the early-fifties sf shows. These ran the gamut from *Space Patrol* to a program the title of which I am no longer certain (*DimensionX?* There was a radio show of that name; was it also used on tv?) which adapted stores from *Astounding*, plus of course that long-running kiddie-favorite, *Captain Video* (on which various sf writers labored from time to time). Of them all, only the one whose name I no longer remember came anywhere close to "good" science fiction. But it should be remembered that this was in the days of live television, before shows were routinely filmed or taped.

Science fiction's career on the tube has always been a spotty one, and for the most part sf has been relegated to the role of kiddie-oriented nonsense and adventure, or—as in *The Invaders* and *The Immortal*—ersatz sf in which one element is fantastic and the general format is mundane.

When *Star Trek* surfaced, in 1966, it was preceded by great amounts of self-serving ballyhoo, a good deal of it directed straight at the sf fan, to convince him that this was the show he'd been waiting for and that it deserved his wholehearted support. I saw a preview of the first episode (written by veteran western writer, Sam Peebles) at the 1966 Westercon in San Diego. It was shown again a few months later at the 1966 World SF Convention in Cleveland, and the convention was all but taken over and run by Gene Roddenberry and his crew of flacks.

Roddenberry had a great deal of help in his missionary efforts from several sf writers who (take your pick) saw *Star Trek* as the television program that would finally put sf on the national map, or saw it as a sure-fire way to line their own pockets and gain entry into tv script-writing and Hollywood. The most vociferous of *Star Trek's* early prophets was Harlan Ellison, who was already sufficiently emersed in Hollywood that I doubt self-gain was among his motives. It was Harlan who launched—or figure-headed—the first "Save Star Trek" campaign, but disillusionment set in when one of his own scripts was finally broadcast, and he subsequently disowned the program and its producers.

The hysteria which *Star Trek* created among the more impressionable fans was deliberately manipulated by its producers for all the mileage they could get. Roddenberry lusted after a Hugo so badly that he entered into a long and sometimes heated correspondence with the 1967

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World SF Convention committee (which, by some coincidence, I co-chaired) in a futile effort to see that his competition that year was eliminated from the Hugo voting ballot. As it turned out, the competition in that category (Dramatic Presentation) was spread among several movies and three or four *Star Trek* episodes, one of which—"The Menagerie"—did indeed win. (That was also the first year at which the costume ball was swamped with "Mr. Spocks" in a variety of pointed plastic ears.)

I was, for a while, about the only voice crying for sanity amid the hysteria. I was the only fan or pro to go on record with the opinion that *Star Trek* might rank well in comparison with *Lost in Space,* but that as good sf it was a near-total failure. As a direct result of this, I was subsequently villified by the Trekkies, and became their Official Ogre to whom they referred in scandalized tones.

My position hasn't altered much in the intervening years, although since the commotion quieted down I've had less and less provocation to voice it.

THAT FIRST *Star Trek* episode was one which I could never accept, and although I watched the majority of the first-season shows and a number of the later ones as well, I was always disappointed by their intrinsic failures. For the most part these were failures of consistency and most of them, by their nature, exposed the underpinning reationale of the program for the intellectually dishonest sham that it was. Individual episodes occasionally surmounted this dishonesty in part but none ever justified it, and this was and is the principal failing of the entire series. As a concept, *Star Trek* was a failure.

Let me give you a few examples:

In the first episode, the Starship Enterprise sails out to the galaxy's edge (or was it the universe's? No matter—both would be equally absurd) where the stars suddenly stop, bang!—just like that. The ship strikes a band of "radiation" which produces some marvelous displays of sparks and whatnot from the ship's control consoles. Thereupon it follows that the "radiation" has transformed one of the ship's crew into a Menace. The remainder of the story deals with attempts to control the Menace.

With a few variations this Menace nonsense was repeated in quite a few of the remaining shows of the first season, effectively making *Star Trek* into a monster show with Japanese overtones, glibly overlaid with a thin veneer of science fiction.

The "science" in that episode was laughable. Not one element made any reasonable sense. It was the sort of "science" a Hollywood veteran would write when called upon for some "sci-fi." It was comic-book science fiction.

Now in the comic books, sf has had a long seige of semi-legitimacy, what with time-travel, galaxy-spanning civilizations, FTL travel, et al cropping up in nearly all the superhero strips of the last decade, and going back in a few to the forties and early fifties. (We'll ignore the few genuine attempts to put sf in comics, starting with Gernsback's early-forties *Superworld Comics,* and followed by EC's *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* in the fifties.) But without exception the science in comic book sf has been laughable. Time travel has been treated like an elevator ("Hmmm, wonder what's going on in 2456 today?"), sans paradoxes. Space-travel is pure magic. One popular superhero "charges his transisters" and is off to battle. His "transisters," let it be noted, allow him to fly, among other marvelous pursuits.

Without exception, what delineates "comic book sf" is the superficiality of

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the rationale. Got a problem? Invent a solution! Phony "sf" can pull a rabbit from your hat any time you want one.

Back to *Star Trek:* Here is this spaceship which can apparently go anywhere at any speed for any distance at all. But it's too big to land on a planet, so how do we get our heroes down? Well, originally a shuttle-craft was mocked up. But the producers realized that a shuttle-craft would slow down the action a lot, get in the way of those fast-moving plots. So the shuttle was scrapped and a *matter-transmitter* was invented! Whew! Just got out of that one in the nick of time!

A *matter-transmitter?*

Golly, yes! And not just *any* old matter-transmitter. *This* one could plunk you down at any set of coordinates you pleased, and pick you up from just about anywhere else you might be—if you wandered off. In fact, I'm not even sure *coordinates* were needed for this marvelous device. It could put you down on the surface of an unexplored fog-shrouded planet and not even miss the surface by a foot. (Imagine what might have happened if good old Captain Kirk had materialized down there with his legs knee high in the ground! Imagine the stunning atomic display as two sets of physical matter attempted to occupy the same place at the same time! Yes, indeedy.) Right: a magical device bearing no relationship to the technology which required spaceships to get about.

Etc. Every show one had to ask oneself what that bumbling nincompoop, Kirk, was doing in the thick of the fray. Why was the *captain* always putting his life on the line, when so often it seemed totally unnecessary? Was he that expendable? Why was the stupid one the captain and the smart one (Spock) his junior? What about the rest of that large but mostly faceless crew? Had they no duties in a planetfall? What did they find to occupy their time aboard ship, save for a cute-looking version of 3-D chess? (They obviously had no interest in women, and apparently no sexual drives of any kind. Remarkable!)

The entire rationale of *Star Trek* was as thin as a *Superman* comic book—and about equally plausible. I remain astonished to this day that with all the time and effort the producers obviously expended on creating *Star Trek* that they did such a poor job. The dramatic possibilities of a more genuine crew structure were never even hinted at, must less explored. (The ship exists to go out and explore the galaxy, right? Well, yes, except for when the scriptwriter forgot. Well, then: Why was there no trained group of shock-troops, whose sole job it would be to make those risky planetfalls? Why did the top-echelon officers always take this incredible gamble into the unknown instead? Further, did no one think of how much more effective it would have been to make the Captain a shadowy figure lurking in the background of the story, the Old Man whose crew thinks of him as a combination of the Devil and God, who seems to know everything going on and who might have been well-used as a legitimate *Deus ex machina* figure? The possibilities for a more realistic and more dramatic structuring of the crew were endless—and totally ignored. Instead we were given an up-to-date version of *Captain Future* with Otho the Android replaced by Mr. Spock.)

The programs themselves often turned on remarkably silly plot devices. Harlan Ellison's time-travel story, for instance—which also won a Hugo (in 1968)—is monumentally silly, depending upon coincidence to a degree that I find impossible to contemplate in "real" sf in book or magazine form.

Add to this cardboard characterization (basically on a level with that in *Lost in*

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Space) and what you have is simply another kiddie-show—a little more sophisticated than most, but equally fraudulent in all its basic postulates, equally lacking in honesty of conception and consistency in follow-through.

This is pretty obvious in retrospect, I think. *Star Trek* was a glossy house of cards and the wonder is that it didn't collapse much sooner than it did.

And why didn't it? There are several reasons, I suspect. One is that the *Star Trek* people ruthlessly manipulated their following. The show never had nearly the audience that it was reputed to have, but the vast majority of those who were *Star Trek* fans were also exceedingly vocal about it. The average letter to a network is presumed to imply support from many thousand silent viewers—because few in the tv audience will *write* letters to a network. For that reason NBC was initially led to believe from a few thousand letters that *Star Trek* had a following of millions. Indeed, if the usual formula of letter-writer-to-total-audience held true, *Star Trek* would have been able to claim one of the largest audiences in television history.

This was not the case and NBC eventually found this out. But only after the network had been coerced into two renewals. You can bet that the campaign which sparked those renewals was controlled by and profited the *Star Trek* producers and their friends.

When that gambit became somewhat threadworn, the relics were brought out for sale. I once leafed through one of the catalogs they put out and while it's true, as Mark Stephenson says, that some of what was offered had intrinsic merit, can you imagine what was involved in selling all the outtakes, *frame by frame?* To say nothing of the more obvious stuff of which Mark thinks little more than I. Running this service was a full-time paid job for several west-coast fans.

The exploitation didn't stop there. It has sold a book about *Star Trek* (in which the reverential attitude displayed is worshipfully fatuous—everything Gene Roddenberry says is printed IN FULL CAPS LIKE THIS, by golly!) and a series of "novelizations" of the episodes plus an original novel by James Blish, who ought to be ashamed of himself but apparently is not. (When the first such book came out, he defended it as a way of introducing new readers to sf in book form. The possibility was real and the defense legitimate. But although Blish claims to have received more mail on his *Star Trek* books than any of his others, it now appears that their readers did not move on to broader horizons—and may indeed have found even Blish's other, better, books indigestible. Saddest of all, even *Star Trek* enthusiasts admit the Blish books were only pale rehashes of the tv episodes, enriched by not a jot. It's hard to view them critically as anything but the prostitution of a considerable talent.)

OKAY, NOW WHAT ABOUT the points Mark raised in his letter earlier?

I'm not going to try to defend Baxter, whose book I haven't read (for lack of opportunity), but if there is any deifying of *Outer Limits* at *Star Trek's* expense, I would guess it is because the former program offered at least the opportunity for better sf. That is, *Outer Limits* was an "anthology" show which presented complete and individual stories on each program, with no ties to those which went before or were to follow. Therefore, the practical limits of the show were not dictated by an existing cast of characters and presupposed background situation. The potential for a good story is obviously better: your protagonist does not have to exit from the episode unchanged by

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it, for example (as was the inflexible case on *Star Trek*) and the ending automatically becomes less predictable. Then too, *Star Trek* was tied down to a "space-opera" format by definition; *Outer Limits* was not. However, I haven't heard any criticism of *Star Trek* in which it was specifically contrasted to *Outer Limits* to the latter's advantage, and I haven't indulged in any myself, so as far as I'm concerned the question of *Outer Limits* is a red herring.

With television in general, however, I think comparisons might be more appropriate. When I first criticised *Star Trek,* one of the immediate questions that I was asked was, "Well, what do you expect of tv, anyway?"

My answer then was, "Quite a lot, actually." The same season the most popular show was *I Spy.* Its underpinnings (pro tennis player works for CIA) weren't a lot more believable, but not only were the plots more workable and the scripts far better written, the characterization was superb. As is usually the case with a well-characterised tv show, luck played a large part—luck in the form of a chance combination of good actors who enjoyed playing against each other. The actors brought their parts alive and it showed. In so doing, they invested the series with a much greater believability. And in any series show that depends on the same principal cast week after week, characterization—and how the audience responds to the characters—will make or break the show.

As it turned out, the Trekkies so loved *Star Trek* that they found depths of character in the wooden Captain Kirk which were never portrayed, and Mr. Spock became a fad-figure (since displaced by Barnabus in *Dark Shadows)* of overwhelming adulation. But the actual characterization—and what the actors did with it—remained very close to zero.

I compared *I Spy* with *Star Trek* in one fanzine article, and was pummelled for my pains with jeering descriptions of bad plots from *I Spy* shows or lectures on the futility of comparing apples to oranges. Somehow my point never came into recognition: that *I Spy* had an overall aura of sophistication, of believability and maturity, which *Star Trek* lacked. And that science fiction on the tube did not *have* to be tied down to a series of comic book conceptualizations. There was—and is—no unwritten law which states that sf can be this good and no better when put on television. The real limits are solely in the minds of those who conceive and execute a program.

"Star Trek," Mark said, "was just such an adult, and I stress the word adult, space opera."

I really wish that word—"adult"—hadn't come up. It's a word which means all things to all people, adults and non-adults alike. It has been used as a euphemism for sexually explicit ("Adult Movies") and as a shorter synonym for non-juvenile ("Heinlein's adult novels"). In Mark's case, from the context in which he employs the word, I gather "adult" means "worth taking seriously." He speaks of the potentiality for "adult" space-operas in the sense, I think, of good stories, well told, which happen to have space-opera settings. And he's quite right: the potential is there. Space-opera is essentially action-adventure set in science fiction terms, and action-adventure, whether in the sf form or that of the mystery or western or sports story or whatever, can be written well. Its quality is limited only by the abilities of its practitioners.

Generally speaking most of the space-opera written these days is written to a level which was unheard of twenty or thirty years ago. Anderson's Flandry

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novels are a good case in point. So also, to a lesser extent, is Greg Benford's *Deeper Than The Darkness*, which Benford deliberately plotted on a space-opera level while writing it as well-characterized "hard science" sf. Yes, the potential is there, and good space-opera is not only possible, it is an (occasional) actuality.

But was *Star Trek* "adult space-opera"?

I really don't think it was. Obviously mine is an opinion not universally shared—and equally obviously Mark disagrees with me. But *I* can't take seriously as sf a series so jerry-rigged with implausibilities, so minimally written, so heavily freighted with stark coincidence, as *Star Trek*. And even among prime-time television programs I would have to rate it less "adult" than most, if not by any means the *least* adult.

But values, after all, are relative. I've been reading sf since 1947, and, like Mark, I've built my collection backward in time as well as forward, so that it encompasses the bulk of the science fiction published in this country since 1926. I read *Doc Savage* with a lot of enjoyment when I was fifteen (in those days back issues could be picked up at three for a quarter . . . *sigh*), and a lot of other unsophisticated stuff as well. But the fact that I could enjoy it—and even enjoy writing it on occasion, as with my Captain America novel—does not mean that I'm blind to its faults. Obviously *Star Trek* did not push my buttons. I was not primed to accept anything labeled "SF" which was aimed over the heads of the five-year-olds, as so many fans were. But I maintained then and still do that had *Star Trek* never appeared as a tv show, had it been *published*, instead, as a magazine or series of books, with exactly the same rationale and stories, well . . . I think it would have been dismissed as "garbage like that Perry Rhodan crap from Germany."

I expect to hear from the Perry Rhodan fans next issue.

A FEW ODDS AND ENDS: Last issue, after I had already prepared the bulk of the issue, the decision was made to Take The Final Step and eliminate our Token Reprint at long last. We increased the type size slightly and hoped we had a complete issue of all-new material.

When the page-proofs came back from the typesetter, we discovered we had a sixteen-page hole to fill! Previously the reprint had nicely fitted just such holes and taken up the slack without undue effort of my part to make sure the issue came out even to the last page. Well, with the brief amount of time we had we did what we could. A de Camp column which had been intended for this issue was pushed ahead and rushed off to our hard-working typesetter (located in California, be it noted), while the publisher readied a portfolio of covers and a few extra house-ads to take up the balance. And since, for once, I hadn't done such items as the editorial and the letter-column at the very last moment, this new, improved status went unremarked-upon in the magazine itself, although blurbed on the cover. Well, I trust you all took it in stride—and I hope I don't receive too many letters of complaint about the missing "classic." Because, further recessions aside (knock wood, cross fingers), this is a permanent change in policy. Yes, that's right: you won't have the "classic reprints" to kick around any more!

Just in under the wire for this issue is Bob Shaw's "A Dome of Many-Colored Glass." This short story, along with his *Analog* stories, "Light of Other Days" and "Burden of Proof," will be incorporated, as interludes, in his new Ace book, *Other Days, Other Eyes*. The novel itself, sans the interludes, will be serialized in AMAZING STORIES, beginning next month,

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the May issue. Because the "lead time" before book publication is rather short this time, we've split the novel and the short story in this fashion between our two magazines. But you read both, don't you? (Of course you do.)

The lead serial this issue, Gordon Eklund's "Beyond the Resurrection," was not easy to divide into two parts for serialization (the novel runs 70,000 words), because as a novel it builds relentlessly towards its climax, beginning rather slowly. This is an occasional problem, and one for which the author should not be faulted—it lies in the mechanics of magazine publication and the demands of serialization. You have my permission to do what I've always done: save the first half until the second is published, and read them together at once. Hopefully you'll find enough else to read in this issue to tide you over the wait.

And, following Gordon's novel, we'll have another blockbuster: Alexei and Cory Panshin's new fantasy novel. It concerns a young barbarian prince, his fall from grace and rise to maturity in a world where magic still works—but exacts its own grim price. I've watched this novel grow from its orgins in the shoptalk Alexei and I used to enjoy at frequent intervals when we both lived in Brooklyn, some three or four years ago, and I've awaited it as eagerly as you surely will.

So stick with us—the best is yet to come!

—TED WHITE

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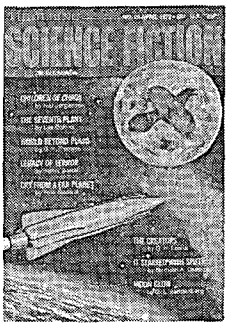

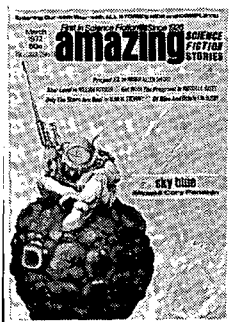

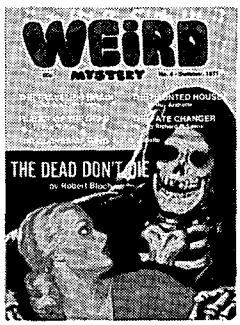

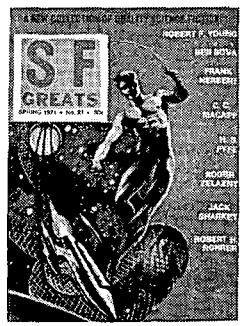

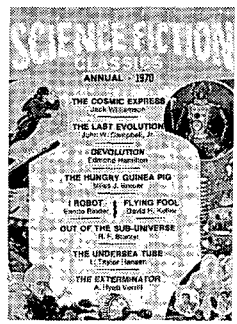

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